REPRESENTATIVE PLAYS BY HENRY ARTHUR JONES

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOLUME ONE

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The Silver King
The Middleman
Judah
The Dancing Girl

VOLUME TWO

The Crusaders
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The Liars
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VOLUME FOUR

Dolly Reforming Herself
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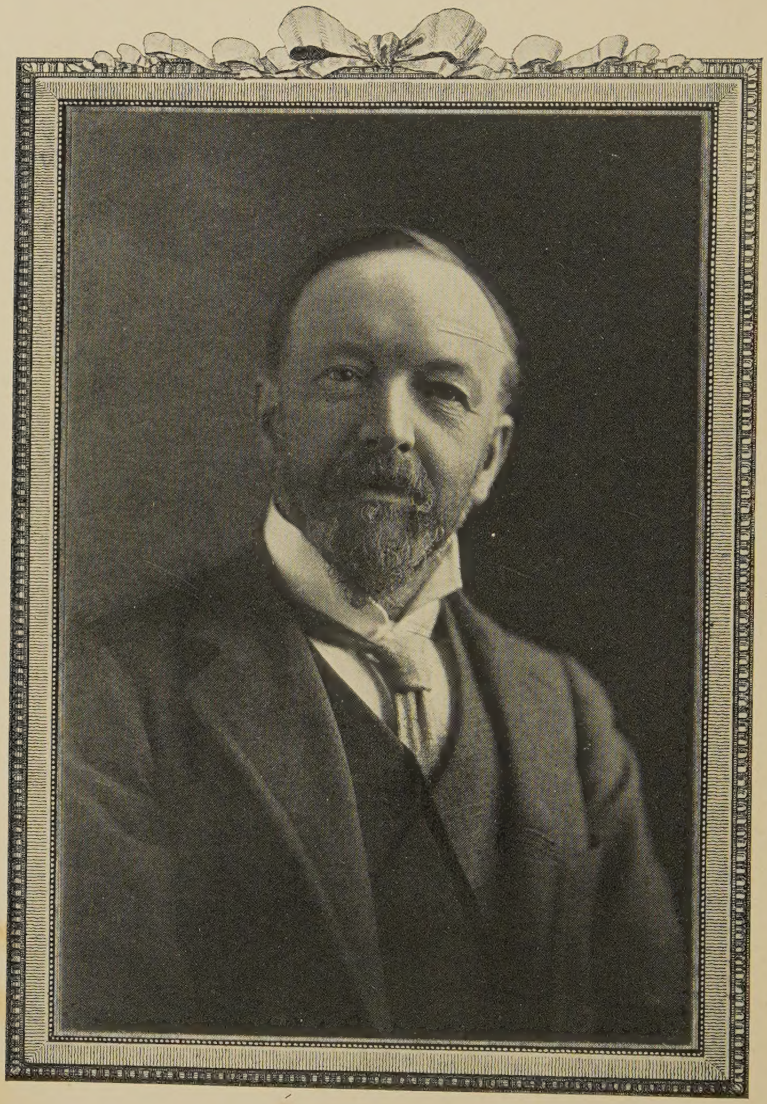

HENRY ARTHUR JONES

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HENRY ARTHUR JONES

EDITED, WITH HISTORICAL, BIOGRAPHICAL,
AND CRITICAL INTRODUCTIONS, BY

CLAYTON HAMILTON

VOLUME ONE

THE SILVER KING
THE MIDDLEMAN
JUDAH
THE DANCING GIRL

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1925

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PREFACE

THE Great War, with its devastating aftermath, put an end to a period of English life, of English literature, and of the English drama.

Normally, the life of the individual is so continuous that he passes imperceptibly from youth to maturity and age; so that, looking backward from threescore years and ten, he cannot possibly pick out a definite date and say, "Until then, I was young; after that, I was old." But if he had been stricken blind at the age of thirty or of forty or of fifty, he would naturally divide his life into two parts, and say, "Till such a day in such a year, I could see." So, in the normal course of human events, one period of history melts imperceptibly into another, the torches of progress are continuously carried forward and continually passed from older hands to younger; yet now and then a great disaster halts the passing of the torches for a decade or a century, after which it is necessary to begin it again from a different starting point.

In nearly all the arts, but particularly in the drama, the Great War violently caused a disruption of continuity which has endured already for a decade. Ten years have been blotted out of the calendar by a black mark which separates the estimable past from the, as yet, inestimable future.

2071

It was in the early eighteen-nineties that Henry Arthur Jones first applied that now familiar phrase, "The Renascence of the English Drama", to a promising movement that was then in progress; but it would be a chronological mistake to label that renascence as a nineteenth-century, or still more, to label it as a Victorian, episode. Its progress was not interrupted by the changing of the centuries or by those minor dates in English history which marked the passing of the sceptre from Victoria to Edward and from Edward to George. In 1914, the leaders of the Renascence of the English Drama were still flourishing in full maturity. Sir Arthur Pinero produced his greatest plays, "The Thunderbolt" and "Mid-Channel", so recently as 1908 and 1909; and Henry Arthur Jones, in 1913, demonstrated with "Mary Goes First" the fact that he was still the master of the modern English comedy of manners. Shaw produced "Androcles and the Lion" in 1912, and Barrie climbed to his climax in 1908 with "What Every Woman Knows." These plays were neither nineteenth century in date nor Victorian in mood and manner; and it is evident that, if the Great War had not intervened, these leaders would have passed their torches on, in an orderly and continuous manner, to the very promising group of younger playwrights that was already pacing at their heels.

But the war caught these leading dramatists at the outset of their sixties, at the very moment when they might have been expected to have the most to say. Pinero was saddened and all but silenced; and the vigourous minds of Jones and

Shaw were diverted from the theatre to philosophical considerations, from their widely different points of view, of the national problems of the moment. Of these four leaders of the English drama, only Barrie, who was somewhat younger than the other three, was temperamentally able to continue his career as a dramatist throughout the war. Of the younger men, a majority of the most promising were engaged in active military service, and sacrificed what might otherwise have been several of the best years of their theatrical apprenticeship. John Galsworthy, by a fortunate accident of years, was the only dramatist of primary importance, excepting Barrie, whose continuity of development was not disrupted. When the war broke out, Mr. Galsworthy was forty-seven years of age — too old for active military service and too young to suffer a quietus to his career as a dramatist.

From the early eighteen-nineties till the outbreak of the war, the Renascence of the English Drama was materially assisted by many able actor-managers who collaborated loyally and faithfully with the leading dramatic authors of the time — such actors, for example, as Sir John Hare, Sir Charles Wyndham, Sir Herbert Tree, Sir George Alexander, and Mr. Lewis Waller. But these men died during the period of the war, and, in the confusion of the moment, their theatres were acquired by a band of real-estate speculators, operating in the manner that had been previously put into practice by the Messrs. Shubert in America. Not only did the leading dramatists of England have to endure a long disruption of their

labours; but also, in the aftermath of the war, they found their leading actors dead and their leading theatres in unsympathetic hands.

It is evident, therefore, that 1914 was a terminal date in the history of the English drama, which put an end to a period just as positively as that earlier tragic date of 1642. A new drama must arise from the ashes of the old; but what it will be like we cannot yet foresee. Meanwhile, however, we may look back beyond a barren decade and attempt a critical evaluation of that Renascence of the English Drama which was suddenly cut off in 1914. As Henley said, in the opening lines of one of his rondeaux, —

> What is to come, we know not; but we know
> That what has been was good.

It is too early yet to criticise the drama of the present, which merely affords us disassociated inklings of the drama of the future; but now that we know that the drama which antedated the Great War is past indeed, we may begin the critical task of studying its historical importance.

It is apparent, therefore, that this is an appropriate time to issue a Library Edition of representative plays by Henry Arthur Jones, that sturdy pioneer in the Renascence of the English Drama. When Jones and Pinero began their careers in the theatre, the publication of current English plays was not customary; indeed, such publication was impossible, because of the defective copyright legislation at that time. In 1891, Mr. Jones inaugurated a movement in favour of the publication of English plays, and his example was

immediately followed by Pinero; but it was not till 1898, some years after the passage of an adequate copyright law, that the vogue of the printed play was made generally popular by Bernard Shaw. Younger dramatists, like Galsworthy and Granville-Barker, now publish their plays as a matter of course; and Barrie has lately been persuaded to prepare the texts of his dramatic works for the reading public. But, for several decades, the plays of Pinero and Jones were printed mainly in pamphlet form, for the use, primarily, of actors, both professional and amateur; and, by this accident, many readers, including a number of college professors who ventured to write "scholarly" theses about the modern English drama, were persuaded to believe that, since the plays of Shaw and Galsworthy and many of the younger men were bound in cloth, they must therefore be superior in literary merit to the plays of Pinero and Jones, which were merely bound in paper.

In recent years, the present editor has endeavoured, in part, to rectify this error by preparing and publishing a Library Edition of the most important plays of Sir Arthur Pinero; and it is now a particular pleasure to complete the task by issuing the present Library Edition of representative plays by Henry Arthur Jones. Most of Mr. Jones's plays have hitherto been printed in prompt-copies, and more than a dozen of them have, from time to time, been published in a more dignified manner; but this is the first time that a representative collection of his dramatic works has been prepared specifically for the reading public.

Mr. Jones has been so fecund and voluminous —

he has produced approximately sixty plays — that the task of selection has been particularly difficult. The author and the editor have been friends for many years, and are thoroughly familiar with each other's standards of critical judgment; yet it has not been easy for them to agree as to precisely which plays should be included and which plays should not, in an edition limited, for practical reasons, to four volumes. An effort has been made to indicate the range and variety of Mr. Jones's work; and, to this end, the editor has insisted — to cite an instance of this problem — upon starting the edition with that celebrated old-time melodrama, "The Silver King", even though the exigencies of space have enforced the consequent omission of one of several dramas of the author's later period which are far superior to "The Silver King" from the literary point of view. One or two plays — like "Saints and Sinners", for example — which had a definite historical importance because they marked certain milestones in the author's progress, have, nevertheless, been omitted because they have been excelled by later plays of the same *genre*. In such cases, an effort to repair the omission has been made in the editorial commentary.

In this Library Edition, the plays selected have been set forth in chronological order and the editorial introductions have been planned to carry the reader's attention from play to play along a continuous current of historical, biographical, and critical comment. Despite the friendly co-operation of the author with the editor, the latter feels that he should expressly absolve Mr. Jones from

any complicity in the purely critical opinions which, from time to time, have been formulated in the course of the commentary. It is not at all embarrassing for a critic to point out shortcomings in the work of an eminent living author whom he has long known as a friend; but it is sometimes a little embarrassing to dilate upon the author's merits. In preparing these four volumes, the editor has made a disinterested effort to exhibit the range and the limitations, the merits and the defects, of Henry Arthur Jones, the dramatist, together with a selection of his plays that is sufficiently representative to afford an adequate basis for that study which, in the long leisure of the future, will result in an ultimate determination of the value of his services to the Renascence of the English Drama.

CLAYTON HAMILTON.

NEW YORK CITY: 1924.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I

THE most august of modern critics, Matthew Arnold, stated that the purpose of criticism is to see the object as in itself it really is, and maintained that, in pursuance of this purpose, the critic should steadfastly defend himself from being influenced by either personal or historical considerations. In estimating the poetry of Chaucer, for example, he should ignore the historical fact that the writer of the "Canterbury Tales" was the earliest of English poets; and if, in studying the poetry of Shelley, the critic should discover an occasional note of immaturity, he should make no allowance for the personal fact that the author died at the early age of thirty.

In my opinion, the Olympian objectivity that Matthew Arnold recommended is possible only in the consideration of the few absolutely perfect works of art in the world. In the familiar instance of the Venus of Melos, for example, our appreciation is utterly unaffected by any personal or historical considerations. We know not who the sculptor was; and assuredly we do not care. It would not interest us in any way to know whether he were old or young, tall or short, slight or heavy, aristocratic or plebeian. Nor do we care where or when he made the statue, nor how

it came to Melos, nor how long it had lain in the earth before it was exhumed.

But there are few works of art so absolute as that; and, in judging the many artists who hover a little lower than the angels, it seems to me not only just but necessary to take into account their personal status and historical position. Judged objectively, there is glorious poetry in "Tamburlaine the Great" and "Doctor Faustus", and there are few finer plays in the world than "Edward II"; yet I think we should belittle Marlowe if we should measure him merely by these accomplishments. In comparing him with the other Elizabethan dramatists, including Shakespeare himself, it is only fair to remember the historical facts that he had no predecessors to make patterns for him, that he inaugurated English blank verse, and that he created the Elizabethan drama out of nothing; and it is only fair to remember also that he was slain at the early age of twenty-nine. Marlowe was only two months older than Shakespeare; but at the time of his death he seemed years and years ahead of his comparatively halting follower. And who shall say that, if the flame-haired, fiery-souled, indomitable youth of Canterbury had lived until the age of fifty-two, we might not now do honour to a greater poet and a greater dramatist than his fellow-bard from Stratford?

It is, of course, too early to determine whether or not even the best plays of Henry Arthur Jones have an absolute value as works of art, — whether or not, to put the point more clearly, such a comedy of manners as "The Liars" will be played, or even

read, three centuries from now and applauded by generations yet unborn; yet there is no question of the historical importance of his plays as factors in the development of the modern English drama and as pictures of English life as it was lived in the thirty years before the war. Judged objectively, Mr. Jones easily holds his own with his contemporary fellow-dramatists. He differs markedly in kind, but scarcely in degree, of merit from Pinero and Shaw and Barrie. His plays, like theirs, will doubtless grow old-fashioned with the passing of the years; but they will continue to hold up a clear mirror to the fashions of their time. And, in judging Mr. Jones, it is neither possible nor desirable to avoid consideration of the personal facts that he was a pioneer of that Renascence of the English Drama which came into being in the early eighteen-nineties, that he had no predecessors to pave the way for him, that he is a self-made man who has lifted himself to a position of dignity and authority by his own unaided efforts, and that he has fought hard all his life for a worthy English drama and has not lost his fight.

II

In recent decades, we have become so accustomed to the existence of a worthy English drama that some commentators are tempted to forget that, forty years ago, when Jones and Pinero were beginning their work in the theatre, there was no contemporary English drama that deserved adult attention. Dramatists who are now of middle age — like Mr. Galsworthy, for instance — found

a theatre prepared for them by these pioneers and are further preparing a theatre for their own successors; but Jones and Pinero, deprived of predecessors, were required, in their different ways, to create a modern English drama out of nothing. As to which of these two pioneers deserves the laurel of historical priority, opinions differ; for, though Jones secured a head start over Pinero in their apprentice years of the early eighteen-eighties, Pinero came to his maturity more quickly in the early eighteen-nineties and antedated most of the important plays of Jones by his epoch-making production of "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" in 1893. But there is credit enough to be divided between them; and, in those early days, they had no competitors for priority, excepting only Oscar Wilde, whose brief career in the theatre — his four contemporary plays were produced within three years — turned out to be little more than a brilliant flash in the pan.

In a lecture which was delivered at Harvard University in 1906, Mr. Jones said that he had dined recently with a book-collecting friend, who, in the course of showing him his treasures, had brought out first editions of "The Rivals", "The School for Scandal", and "She Stoops to Conquer". "There!", this discriminating bibliophile exclaimed, "that 's all the harvest of your English drama for the last two hundred years." Those three little volumes were all that a wealthy collector thought worthy to secure of the dramatic art of the Anglo-Saxon race in two entire centuries.

In order to appreciate the historical importance of that Renascence of the English Drama which

was initiated in the eighteen-nineties, it is necessary to review the causes which resulted in that long divorce between the drama and literature which lasted in England from 1777, the date of the production of "The School for Scandal", until 1893, the date of the production of "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray". How was it that the English drama, which had gloriously overtopped the world in the Elizabethan period, had sunk so low in the Victorian period that cultured people held it in the same contempt which they manifest to-day toward the vast majority of the products of our motion-picture factories?

The causes of the decadence of the English drama in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries may be reviewed most briefly and conveniently under five different headings.

1. In the first place, the great Elizabethan drama, which had flourished for half a century from Marlowe to Shirley, was violently disrupted and destroyed by the Cromwellian revolution. In 1642, a Roundhead Parliament passed an edict closing all the theatres in the land and forbidding the performance of stage plays; and this edict remained in force until the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. For eighteen years, during which a whole new generation was born and grew up to maturity, there was no drama at all in England; and of course the great movement which had culminated with Shakespeare could not survive this disruption of historical continuity.

Nearly all the English poets and playwrights were Royalists; and, throughout the many years of the Protectorate, they lived in aristocratic exile

in France. When they returned to England with Charles II and re-opened the theatres in 1660, they had lost respect for the Elizabethan drama; and, with the rhymed couplets of Racine ringing in their ears, they attempted a new type of Heroic Tragedy in rhyme, made from materials either borrowed from or suggested by the popular French romances of the time. This extraneous experiment was short-lived, because it was not indigenous to England; but for some little time it protracted the interruption of the true tradition of English tragedy.

In comedy, the Restoration writers borrowed many characters and scenes from Molière; but they failed to acquire the structural art of the great French master, and they failed even more markedly to emulate his healthy and wholesome tone. As a not unnatural reaction from the excesses of the Roundheads, who had kept the theatres closed for eighteen years, the Restoration dramatists rushed at once to the other extreme and indulged in an orgy of licentiousness. The flagrant immorality of Wycherley, Congreve, and Vanbrugh was not characteristically English, like the coarseness of Jonson and Dekker; nor was the Restoration comedy a national drama, in the representative sense in which the phrase may be applied to the outpourings of the Elizabethan period. It was a drama written by aristocrats for aristocrats; it was confined entirely to London and had no influence throughout the country at large.

The vituperative attack of the Puritan Jeremy Collier against the immorality of the Restoration drama, though intemperate in tone, was amply

justified — a fact which the manly Dryden honestly admitted. But, when, as a result of Dryden's urging, an attempt was made to ameliorate the situation, the best that could be done by such dramatists as Cibber and Steele was to substitute the sugar of sentimentality for the salt of immorality. English comedy, in the eighteenth century, became not merely purified but emasculated; and no works of prime importance were produced, except in the decade of the seventeen-seventies, when Sheridan and Goldsmith suddenly flashed forth with three immortal masterpieces. For this brief but brilliant flare-up, I know of no historical explanation, except the fact that both Goldsmith and Sheridan, like Farquhar before them and Wilde and Shaw a century after them, happened to be Irishmen. It is, of course, exceedingly unfortunate that Sheridan's ambitions for a political career induced him to renounce the habit of writing plays while he was still a young man in his twenties; for, upon his defection, English comedy died indeed, and remained buried for more than a century.

2. In the second place, for two centuries and a half (from 1642 to 1892), the English drama was obliged to endure an inherited distrust of the theatre and all its works which had been implanted in that middle class which is not unjustly called the backbone of the nation, by its Puritan forbears. In closing the theatres in 1642 and keeping them closed for an entire generation, the Puritans not only disrupted the continuity of English drama, but implanted a prejudice against the theatre which the English nation as a whole has hardly yet

entirely lived down. The Roundheads must bear their share of the blame for the excessive licentiousness of the Restoration drama; for history teaches us that an unjustified restraint of liberty tends always to result in an equally unjustified recourse to license. In the recent history of the United States, for instance, the adoption of the prohibition amendment has turned many thousands of moderate drinkers of good liquor into immoderate drinkers of bad liquor. Although it is impossible to disagree with the hostility of Jeremy Collier against the Restoration drama, it is unfortunate that the widespread influence of Puritanism throughout English life should have remained hostile to the theatre for nearly two centuries after the sound basis of Collier's attack had been removed.

American readers may need to be reminded that England still maintains the anachronistic institution of a censorship of plays, that Shaw has suffered particularly from this incubus, and that Pinero and Jones, in the eighteen-nineties, while launching what were then regarded as advanced and daring dramas, were obliged to write with one eye on the censor and the other eye on Mrs. Grundy.

3. In the third place, the so-called literary drama of the nineteenth century was started off on a wrong track by a peculiarly unfortunate misapplication of the influence of Shakespeare. In the age of Queen Anne, Shakespeare had been contemptuously regarded as a barbarian; but, at the end of the eighteenth century, he had been reestablished as an idol by the leaders of the romantic revival. By literary critics, like Coleridge and

Lamb, he was lauded not only as the greatest poet and the greatest dramatist that ever lived, but also as the only great exemplar for all poetic dramatists to come. Unfortunately there was no dramatic critic at that time to teach the true doctrine that, though Shakespeare at his best is eternal in his substance, he is dated in his form, since his plays were fashioned to fit the physical exigencies of the Elizabethan theatre. Nearly all the great poets of the nineteenth century in England endeavoured to write plays; but, instead of studying the conditions of the theatre in their own time, they adopted the Elizabethan form of Shakespeare and succeeded only in writing anachronisms. These misguided men of letters, in seeking to uplift the English drama, made the mistake of trying to tug it upward by the hair instead of getting underneath it. Two, at least, of the nineteenth-century pseudo-Shakespearian compositions — the "Virginius" of Sheridan Knowles and the "Richelieu" of Bulwer-Lytton — achieved a certain degree of theatrical vitality; but, basically, they were merely artificial melodramas decked out in the fustian of imitative verse.

4. In the fourth place, this false trend of the English drama was aided and abetted by the great galaxy of great actors which, throughout the nineteenth century, made the English stage illustrious. As Mr. Jones has repeatedly pointed out in his critical writings, the drama is one thing and the theatre is another. The drama is an art of authorship; but the theatre is a temple of entertainment which is capable of exhibiting many other things beside the drama. The theatre often flourishes in

periods when the contemporary drama is dead; and it is a fact of history that dramatic authorship has nearly always been in abeyance in those periods when the public has been attracted to the theatre primarily by the prowess of very famous actors. The great actors of the nineteenth century, from Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, through Kean and Macready, all the way to Irving, did little or nothing to foster contemporary authorship. When they were not playing Shakespeare, they preferred to appear in imitations of Shakespeare, confident that their own art would make it difficult for the public to distinguish between the true and the false. Even Sir Henry Irving, who lived into the twentieth century, did absolutely nothing to aid the Renascence of the English Drama and never appeared in any play by Pinero, Jones, Shaw, Barrie, or any of their followers. Next to Shakespeare, his favourite dramatist was W. G. Wills.

5. In the fifth place, the development of a contemporary English drama was impeded and all but made impossible throughout the first nine decades of the nineteenth century by the lack of adequate copyright protection. The French drama of the nineteenth century, from 1830 onward, was extremely vigourous; the fertile and facile Eugène Scribe wrote hundreds of plays which were very easy to adapt; and, since there was no international copyright agreement between England and France, it was cheaper for the English theatrical managers to steal French plays than to pay English playwrights for original compositions. Authors with a natural aptitude for the theatre,

like Charles Reade, complained that they were forced, against their desires, to write novels, in order to earn a living.

Also, until nearly the end of the century, the lack of copyright protection made it impossible for English dramatists to print and publish their plays without relinquishing their authority to restrict and control the acting rights. For instance, if an English play were published, it could be pirated in America and the author would receive no royalties from the market overseas. Because of this situation, the publication of plays became uncustomary and the English public lost the habit of reading them. This was one of the prime reasons for the almost absolute divorce of the English drama from English literature in the nineteenth century; and it is not surprising that, as a result of this divorce, plays which were readable became unactable and plays which were actable became unreadable. For the removal of this impediment, the recent English drama is more indebted to Henry Arthur Jones than to any other single man. He pleaded early and pleaded earnestly for the publication of plays at the time of their production; and he fought as sturdily for copyright protection as he has fought in later years against the censorship.

III

Prophets who bring a new message and establish a new era are nearly always preceded by a voice crying from the wilderness; and, though Pinero and Jones were without predecessors who gave the faintest promise of such fine achievements

as "Mid-Channel" or "Michael and His Lost Angel", it would not be fair to fail to mention the one English playwright who, in the decade of the eighteen-sixties, tried at least to hold the mirror up to nature and to render a veritable picture of the life of his time. This was Thomas William Robertson (1829–1871). Though his best play, "Caste", which dates from 1867, is still occasionally acted as a sort of antique curiosity, Robertson's works have not endured either as drama or as literature; but at least he tried to be true and simple and unaffected, and he exercised an excellent influence upon the younger men who followed him.

This influence was strongly felt by Pinero. Such plays as "Sweet Lavender" (1888) and "Lady Bountiful" (1891) might justly be described as Robertson plays written by an abler man; and, in "Trelawney of the 'Wells'" (1898), Sir Arthur paid a charming tribute to his predecessor. Upon Henry Arthur Jones, however, even in his earliest period, the influence of Robertson was scarcely at any time discernible. Whereas Pinero began by writing farces and sentimental comedies, Jones began by writing melodramas, and showed even at the outset a comparative contempt for Robertson's accomplishments.

No two men could differ more in temperament and in their attitude toward a common cause than the two pioneers of the Renascence of the English Drama. It is not an exaggeration to say that Pinero made no contribution whatsoever to this important movement — except the very valuable contribution of his own plays. In the habit of his

mind, Sir Arthur has always held himself aloof and lonely in his work, whereas Mr. Jones, in his mental habit, has been more communal and social. In his entire career, Pinero has delivered only one lecture, his celebrated address in Edinburgh on "Robert Louis Stevenson — the Dramatist"; and the subject of this lecture had nothing to do with the new movement in the drama. Despite the critical acumen which Sir Arthur revealed in this address, he has never written a critical article on any aspect of the drama; he has held himself aloof from all controversies and discussions; he has never talked for publication about his own dramatic compositions or those of his contemporaries; he has kept his own counsel, produced his plays, and let the matter go at that. But as soon as Mr. Jones perceived the necessity and conceived the possibility of a modern English drama that should be worthy of adult attention, he devoted himself to this social cause with the passionate ardour of the propagandist. Not only did he vie with Pinero in contributing to the theatre, season after season, the best plays that he was capable of writing; but he also pleaded, argued, fought for the Renascence of the English Drama, in letters to the press, in critical articles for the magazines, in polemical prefaces to his own plays, in lectures before universities and learned societies — in short, through every available channel of publicity. Even if he had never written a play, his services to the modern English drama would still be comparable with those of William Archer and George Bernard Shaw, in Mr. Shaw's earlier capacity as a dramatic critic before he took to writing plays of his own.

Unlike Mr. Shaw, Mr. Jones never had the time to exercise the influence of a regular reviewer of the current stage; but the essays and lectures which are collected in his two important volumes, "The Renascence of the English Drama" (1895) and the "Foundations of a National Drama" (1912), hold a high rank in the literature of dramatic criticism. His critical writings, though less brilliant, are sounder than those of Mr. Shaw; and, since they deal in the main with general principles instead of particular plays, they are of more lasting importance to students of the drama.

IV

Apart from his activities in and for the theatre, the life of Henry Arthur Jones has been singularly uneventful; and, in reviewing his career, it is necessary to emphasise only those points which are important to an appreciation of his work.

In the first place, it should be noted that, in birth and breeding, Mr. Jones is more characteristically English than any other of the leading playwrights of his time. He has often said to me and to many of his other friends that his name has been a handicap to him in his career — that it would have been less difficult for him to attain recognition as an artist if his last name had not been so commonplace as Jones and his first name had not been so plebeian as Henry. In my opinion, however, his name affords an excellent label for his work, because it indicates that representative English quality which is comparatively lacking in the work of his fellow-dramatists.

Though Sir Arthur Pinero was born and brought up in London, his paternal grandfather was a Portuguese Jew, and it is doubtless because of his strains of Latin and Jewish blood that his best plays seem more European and less specifically English than the best plays of Mr. Jones. Mr. Shaw is, of course, an Irishman, and Sir James Barrie is a Scotsman; and each of them has retained emphatically the native complexion of his mind.

Henry Arthur Jones was born on September 28, 1851, in an old English farmhouse at Grandborough in Buckinghamshire. His father, Sylvanus Jones, was a tenant farmer; and the future dramatist received his only formal education at the grammar school of Winslow. At the early age of thirteen, he was placed with a commercial firm. Later, he went into business at Bradford, and was for some years a commercial traveller. These are the only important facts in his biography until 1878, when, at the age of twenty-seven, he produced, at Exeter, his first play, "Only Round the Corner."

But these facts are important in several ways. With the single exception of Sir James Barrie, whose father was a weaver in the little Scottish village of Kirriemuir, Mr. Jones is of humbler origin than any other of the leading British playwrights of his time. He is not only thoroughly English in race, but he is also thoroughly representative of that great middle class which is justly regarded as the backbone of the nation. In this respect, he affords an interesting contrast to such a dramatist as John Galsworthy. The patrician

Mr. Galsworthy, educated at Harrow and at Oxford, endowed with private means, and favoured with the early advantages of travel and the later advantages of leisure, is philanthropically concerned, in his dramatic writings, with the plights and problems of the desperate poor; but the plebeian Mr. Jones, accustomed to poverty in his early years, is satirically concerned, in his dramatic writings, with the foibles and frivolities of the aristocracy. Unquestionably, one of the reasons why Mr. Jones has excelled all his contemporaries in the comedy of manners is the fact that, as a representative of the middle class, he was able to consider the aristocracy from an external point of view.

Again, it is doubtless because Henry Arthur Jones was self-educated that he is so thoroughly educated. He had to work hard for those advantages which are easily bestowed on others by an accident of birth. He is thoroughly read in English literature, deeply read in French literature, and widely read in the literature of the world. His work has style. Not only is he a master of dialogue, which is one of the most difficult of literary mediums, but his critical writings reveal a fine and forcible prose, and his poetic play, "The Tempter", discloses a more than merely acceptable blank verse.

By dint of a dominant earnestness, abounding energy, and unremitted industry, Mr. Jones has lifted himself to a position of dignity and power, not only in the English theatre but in English life at large. The way was not made easy for him; for, though in America we are accustomed to the

success of self-made men, it was much more difficult in nineteenth-century England for a man to climb the ladder of society to a station far above the level on which he had been born.

It is not so strange that the farmer's son who began life as a commercial traveller should have entertained literary ambitions in his youth, as it is that he should have felt a strong call toward the theatre, an institution which for generations had endured the hostility of the class from which he came. Pinero, a lawyer's son, forsook the law at the age of nineteen to become an actor, and remained an actor for seven years; but Mr. Jones, the commercial traveller, had to pry his way into the theatre from the outside. In 1879, a year later than his first experiment at Exeter, a piece of his entitled "A Clerical Error" was produced in London; and, in this little play, Mr. Jones appeared as an actor with Miss Winifred Emery (Mrs. Cyril Maude). Apparently he had few gifts and little incentive for a career upon the stage; but his thoroughness as a stage-director, even in the production of his earliest plays, shows that from the outset he must have had a quite uncommon understanding of the profession of the actor. In his critical writings, he has devoted his attention mainly to the problems of the playwright and has dealt very little with the art of acting; but, in going to the theatre with him many times in London and New York, I have found his comments on the performers exceedingly illuminative.

From 1878 to 1881, Mr. Jones produced nine or ten plays of no particular importance, most of which were curtain-raisers in one act. Then, in

1882, when he was only thirty-one years old, he suddenly attained a great financial success which marked the turning-point in his life. This was achieved with the celebrated melodrama called "The Silver King", which he wrote for Wilson Barrett, in collaboration with Henry Herman.

The subsequent career of Mr. Jones may be traced most conveniently in connection with his successive plays; and such biographical facts as seem important to the editor will be brought out from time to time in the course of the critical commentaries on the plays in this edition.

"THE SILVER KING"

"The Silver King", written in collaboration with Henry Herman, and produced by Wilson Barrett on November 16, 1882, was hailed by William Archer as "quite the best of modern English melodramas"; and the passage of time has amply justified this verdict. It was enormously successful at the outset, and it has held the stage for forty years. It has been acted thousands of times, in Great Britain, the United States, Canada, South Africa, Australia, and has been produced successfully in many of the countries of continental Europe; and, in recent years, it has been translated several times into the new medium of motion pictures.

In the biography of Henry Arthur Jones, the production of "The Silver King" is important for two reasons. In the first place, it showed, at the very outset of his long career, that he had already mastered the strategy and tactics of the theatre. The future author of "Michael and His

Lost Angel" and "The Liars" graduated from the theatrical to the literary: he did not — as so many other authors have endeavoured unsuccessfully to do — begin his career as a man of letters and subsequently try to learn the mechanism of the theatre. And, in the second place, this melodrama made a comfortable fortune for Mr. Jones at the early age of thirty-one; so that, from that time onward, he was able to undertake experiments toward a better drama and to develop his talents deliberately to the very best of his ability. The poor tenant farmer's son desperately needed an endowment in order that he might play a leading part in the Renascence of the English Drama; and he proceeded to endow himself by writing a money-making melodrama which gave the public of the moment precisely what that public wanted.

"The Silver King", of course, was written with no thought of publication; and Mr. Jones was hesitant at first about including it in this edition. He now regards it as utterly old-fashioned — which, of course, it is; he finds it lacking in literary merit; and he does not think that it can be considered seriously as a work of art, like several of his later and maturer compositions. But, in the editor's opinion, a play which has had such an extraordinary vogue in the theatre, a play, moreover, which has long been recognised as quite the best of its species that was produced in England in the nineteenth century, must surely be worthy of study, particularly by apprentices to the craft of making plays. And students of the theatre, after reading "Michael and His Lost Angel", which the author rightly regards as his masterpiece and

which ran only two weeks in London and one week in New York, may find an ironic sort of interest in turning back to "The Silver King", which for forty years has been actor-proof and production-proof and has never failed to interest the theatre-going masses.

In order rightly to appreciate "The Silver King", we should endeavour, by an effort of imaginative sympathy, to regard it from the point of view of the English audience of 1882. Old fashions are not necessarily bad fashions; and only the uncultured are restricted to the enjoyment of the contemporary. When we study Racine, or Shakspeare, or Euripides, when we see their plays in the theatre, we easily accept the fashions and conventions of the far-off centuries in which they wrote their masterpieces and do not complain because these fashions and conventions are different from those to which we have been made accustomed latterly by Ibsen and his successors. And if "The Silver King" is utterly old-fashioned to-day, we should not forget that it was Henry Arthur Jones who, in the eighteen-nineties, did as much as any other English dramatist to establish that new fashion in play-making which rendered obsolete or obsolescent all the plays which he had written till that time.

In the first place, it should be remembered that "The Silver King" was written for a type of playhouse which was much larger than the type which is prevalent to-day and for a kind of acting which was more robust than that which has become habitual in the eaves-dropping drama of more recent decades. The "intimate" drama had not

yet been conceived, nor could it have been housed in the huge theatres of the time; and it was not yet regarded as a duty for the dramatic writer to ape the under-emphasis of casual conversation. Rhetoric was what the actors required and the public wanted. Judged by the standards of the time, there was admirable rhetoric in such a speech as this: "Though I should fly to the uttermost ends of the earth, as high as the stars are above, or as deep as the deepest sea bed is below, there is no hiding-place for me, no rest, no hope, no shelter, no escape"; and there was a certain grandeur in the tortured hero's magnificent ejaculation, "O God! put back thy universe and give me yesterday!" The dialogue, of course, was studded with soliloquies and asides; for the actors had not yet been withdrawn from the apron of the stage and taught to comport themselves as if there were no audience present to listen to them. Although the drama of the present moment eschews the aside and even the soliloquy as unskilful, we should never forget that these conventions had been customary in the drama from 400 B.C. to 1890 A.D., and that it is not at all certain that, before long, they will not be restored. Much might be said in favour of these expedients: imagine "Hamlet", for example, with its soliloquies deleted! They are no more "unnatural" than many other theatrical devices which are accepted without question in the realistic drama of to-day; and to the audience of 1882 they did not seem unnatural at all.

"The Silver King" was constructed for that type of inner and outer stage which had been in-

herited from the theatre of the Restoration. It was originally planned in seventeen scenes, but this number was reduced to fifteen in the stage-production. It will be noted that shallow scenes alternate with deep: that is to say, certain scenes are played before a painted drop-cloth, in the apron of the stage, without any furniture and with scarcely any properties, while, behind the painted drop, the next full-stage scene is being prepared, with a box-set completely furnished. This practical arrangement permitted an unimpeded fluency of narrative, which has been hampered by our latter-day abolition of the apron stage and our restriction of the dramatist to a single scene per act, set in three dimensions within a picture-frame proscenium. Already there are signs that the stagecraft of the future will abolish this "modern improvement" and will effect a return to the inner and outer stage. Certainly such a melodrama as "The Silver King" was far more effective in a sequence of fifteen scenes than it would be if it were reconstructed according to the pattern which is prevalent to-day and squeezed into not more than four distinct pigeon-holes of place and time.

Melodrama is, of course, that secondary type of serious drama in which the plot dominates the characters, in which all the parts are clearly labelled as virtuous or vicious, in which the hero, though in constant jeopardy, comes out happy at the end, and the villain, though momentarily triumphant, is finally foiled. "The Silver King" was made up, in the main, of traditional materials; yet these materials were put together with an

extraordinary dramaturgic skill. Even the most sophisticated theatre-goer of to-day will find it difficult, in re-reading this old text, to resist the rapid onrush of the action from one resounding theatrical effect to others still more resonant. The story, of course, does not show a photographic resemblance to actual life; but it is unquestionably palpitant with a life of its own, which is of the theatre, by the theatre, for the theatre. Though utterly improbable, the narrative is not utterly impossible; and it is made to seem plausible during the two hours' traffic of the stage.

The characters, for the most part, are stock figures. Particularly difficult to accept to-day, by any effort of imaginative sympathy, is the long-suffering heroine. Though married to a drunkard and a wastrel whom she believes to be a murderer, she remains not only unfalteringly faithful to him, but loyal to his memory many years after she thinks that he is dead, enduring privation and starvation not only for herself but for her children also, instead of renouncing the heritage of shame that he has heaped upon her and going forth into the world as an independent woman to earn an honest living. She is too good to be true, and with a sort of goodness which, to our more modern mind to-day, seems positively silly. But the hero, Wilfred Denver, and the villain, known as "The Spider", are something more than mere stock characters. In the hands of able actors, these parts become representative of life.

Of course, the one great point of originality in "The Silver King" was the fact that the hero was regenerated morally by suffering the agonies of

remorse for a crime which he did not commit. Denver believes himself to be a murderer. In the first act, he is so cleverly enmeshed in circumstantial evidence that he is convinced by this evidence himself; and it is not until the end of the play that he discovers that he is innocent of the murder of Geoffrey Ware. This was a great theatrical idea; and it gave to the entire play that increase of vitality which made it the most famous English melodrama of the nineteenth century.

FROM "SAINTS AND SINNERS" TO "THE MIDDLEMAN"

Mr. Jones himself has written, "After the great popular success of 'The Silver King', I produced 'Saints and Sinners'. It was the best I could do at that time. It was hooted on the first night and condemned by nearly all the London press. It narrowly escaped failure, and only obtained success through Matthew Arnold's generous advocacy, and because of the discussion caused in religious circles by its presentation of certain phases of English dissenting life."

"Saints and Sinners" was produced in London on September 25, 1884. It has not been thought necessary to include the play in this edition, because it now seems not only exceedingly old-fashioned but also unquestionably crude; but it marked an important point in the development of Henry Arthur Jones. As soon as he was in a position to write a play to please himself, he endeavoured earnestly to emancipate himself from melodrama and to write a veritable study of con-

temporary life; but, as yet, his reach exceeded his grasp and he lacked the experience necessary for a complete accomplishment of his purpose.

The central character is a non-conformist minister, named Jacob Fletcher. His daughter, Letty, immature and somewhat flighty, cannot quite decide to accept the honest devotion of a young farmer, George Kingsmill, who wants to marry her. She is attracted, instead, by the glamour of an insincere aristocrat, Captain Eustace Fanshawe. While they are returning from a Sunday-school outing, Fanshawe lures Letty into the wrong train at a railway junction and spirits her away to London. A month elapses before her distracted father and lover are able to trace the seduced girl to Torquay, where she is living with her betrayer. The minister brings his daughter home with him and tries to hide her shame from his parishioners. But the Senior Deacon of the congregation, Samuel Hoggard, a tight-fisted, hard-hearted, money-grubbing tradesman, is at enmity with Jacob Fletcher, because the latter has refused to sell a bit of property, which he holds in trust for a widow and an orphan, to the grasping Hoggard for a sum much less than its real value. The deacon discovers the facts of Letty's misadventure and gives Fletcher a choice between sacrificing the widow's property as the price of silence or else being forced to resign his pulpit. Thereupon the minister at once confesses Letty's shame to the entire congregation and accepts the consequences. This dramatic climax is, of course, the forerunner of several other confession scenes in Mr. Jones's later and maturer dramas. In the

last act, Hoggard, now guilty of bank-wrecking, receives his just deserts from his indignant fellow-citizens; Jacob Fletcher is called back to his pulpit; and Letty dies to slow music, in the presence of George Kingsmill, who has returned from Australia in time for the final curtain. At least, she died in the first version of the play; but, while the success of the piece was still doubtful, the author was persuaded to substitute a final scene in which Letty was happily united with George.

It will be noted that, despite the author's sincere effort to do the best he could do at that time, "Saints and Sinners" remained essentially a melodrama. The characters were divided sharply into two camps, the good and the bad; and, at nearly every point, they were dominated by the plot. This plot was both conventional and sentimental; and, moreover, it was laid out in nine scenes, in accordance with the traditions of the inner and outer stage. The rhetorical soliloquies and the frequently superfluous asides now seem more stilted and artificial than those of "The Silver King", precisely because the author was endeavouring to write a realistic study of actual life.

But, after destructive criticism has done its worst with "Saints and Sinners", the historical fact remains that it was a remarkable play for Mr. Jones to have produced so early as 1884. What made it remarkable was that, in many incidental passages, he did manage to draw a fairly faithful picture of Non-Conformist middle-class life in a small community — the sort of life which he had actually seen about him in his childhood and early youth. Hoggard is admirably drawn,

and so is the Junior Deacon, Prabble. It is a matter of considerable historical interest to note that, in 1884, the playwright's right to portray contemporary religious life upon the stage was seriously challenged. There were strenuous objections to a play in which the leading figure was a minister and in which his senior deacon was represented as a hypocrite; but to these objections Mr. Jones replied in a vigorous article on "Religion and the Stage", in the "Nineteenth Century" for January, 1885, in which he successfully upheld the right of a dramatist to deal with clerical life.

In 1891, as soon as the new American copyright bill had been passed, Mr. Jones proceeded to publish "Saints and Sinners", with a preface which, in some respects, now seems more important than the play itself. In this preface, he pleaded for the publication of English plays as the surest means of counteracting the long divorce that had endured between the English drama and English literature, and stated that, however successful a play might be in the theatre, it must be submitted successfully to the subsequent test of the library before it could be regarded as a contribution to dramatic literature. Of "Saints and Sinners", he said, writing seven years after the date of its composition: "I am conscious of very many defects in the play. I wish I could ascribe them to the bad school in which any English playwright who began to learn his art in 1870 was necessarily nurtured. . . . But, though I may not lay the flattering unction to my soul that the artificial conditions of the English drama at the time of my learning stagecraft were responsible for all the

failings of 'Saints and Sinners', I think I may honestly plead them as an extenuation of some of its worst defects."

In 1884, when "Saints and Sinners" was still hovering between success and failure, the author was considerably heartened by the commendation of Matthew Arnold, who wrote to him as follows:

"I went to see 'Saints and Sinners', and my interest was kept up throughout, as I expected. You have remarkably the art — so valuable in drama — of exciting interest and sustaining it. The piece is full of good and telling things, and one cannot watch the audience without seeing that by strokes of this kind faith in the middle-class fetish is weakened, however slowly, as it could be in no other way.

"I must add that I dislike seduction-dramas (even in 'Faust' the feeling tells with me), and that the marriage of the heroine with her farmer does not please me as a *dénouement*.

"Your representative middle-class man (Hoggard) was well drawn and excellently acted."

It should be remembered that Matthew Arnold, for a quarter of a century, had regarded the contemporary English drama as utterly unworthy of attention; and Mr. Jones was justly proud of the fact that he had succeeded in bringing the great apostle of culture into the English theatre after many years of absence. Yet, only a few years before, Arnold, in his famous essay on the visit of the Comédie Française to London in 1879, had emphasised the importance of the theatre as a matter involving society as a whole, and had concluded his remarks with the clarion call, "The

theatre is irresistible! Organise the theatre!" This slogan Henry Arthur Jones at once adopted as his motto. The direct influence of Matthew Arnold is clearly discernible in all his critical writings; and, more than any other English playwright of his generation, he has endeavoured to use the theatre for the propagation of those cultural forces which Arnold was forever advocating in his preachments.

Though "Saints and Sinners" eventually enjoyed a run of two hundred nights, Mr. Jones has written: "Before I knew that the piece had settled into an assured success, I had weakly sold myself to what the 'Saturday Review' justly calls, 'the dull devil of spectacular melodrama'. And I remained a bondslave for many years." Though he produced half a dozen plays between 1884 and 1889, none of these was of any genuine importance. But the piece which marked the culmination of this early period of melodrama deserves to be remembered. This was "The Middleman", which was first produced in London on August 27, 1889, with E. S. Willard in the leading rôle.

"The Middleman" marked another milestone in the progress of Henry Arthur Jones. It was the best play of his early, or old-fashioned, period and, with the single exception of "The Silver King", the most successful; and though, in manner and in method, it still revealed the influence of what the author himself has called the bad school in which he had necessarily been nurtured, it pointed clearly forward to a future period, in its serious discussion of a social theme. This theme has been summed up by Mr. Jones himself in a

Biblical quotation: "Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth". A poor artisan, Cyrus Blenkarn, has invented a new process of manufacturing porcelain which has been practically stolen from him by an unscrupulous promoter, Joseph Chandler, who has exploited it so successfully that he has built up a large factory and become the leading citizen of a small industrial city. The inequity of a social situation which permits a man without brains to enrich himself by exploiting the inventive genius of another man is a subject that might seem made to the hand of such a latter-day dramatist as John Galsworthy. Already, in 1889, Henry Arthur Jones was earnestly endeavouring to employ the drama as a medium for the discussion of social problems of serious importance.

But, in method and in manner, "The Middleman" was still old-fashioned; and, in these respects, it more nearly resembles "The Silver King" than it resembles the later products of its author's prime. It is melodramatic, sentimental, and perhaps excessively theatrical. Once more we are confronted with the middle-class father of a daughter who loves not wisely but too well a young man whose station in life is superior to her own; and the piece only narrowly escapes being one of those seduction-dramas against which Matthew Arnold had mildly protested. The motive of revenge is developed in a melodramatic manner; and the structure is artificial in its some-

what too obvious employment of the pattern of the tables turned. The dialogue is old-fashioned, not only in its employment of soliloquies and asides, but also in the resonant rhetoric of its curtain-speeches.

But all this is only another way of saying that "The Middleman" was written in the eighteen-eighties. It was the best English play of its time, and it is still deserving of historical study. It held the stage for twenty years, and was enjoyed by millions of theatre-goers in England and America.

Throughout his career, Mr. Jones has been particularly fortunate in his actors; and the long-continued popularity of "The Middleman" was due, to a considerable extent, to the powerful and impassioned performance of E. S. Willard in the rôle of Cyrus Blenkarn. Willard was an exceedingly ingratiating actor, with a beautiful face and a wonderfully sympathetic voice; and though, from first to last, he appeared in several other plays by Henry Arthur Jones, Cyrus Blenkarn remained his most popular part and he kept it in his repertory year after year. One of my most vivid memories of the theatre in my childhood is of the fire and passion, the charm and variety, of the well-belovèd Willard in the character of the old potter; and since this memory must be shared by thousands of theatre-goers who are now over forty years of age, I have decided to include "The Middleman" in this Library Edition, even though the author himself was at first inclined to consider it too old-fashioned to deserve a place among his representative plays.

"JUDAH"

It would almost seem as if the silent shifting of the calendar from the eighteen-eighties to the eighteen-nineties had exercised some subtle influence over Henry Arthur Jones; for though "Judah" was produced less than a year after "The Middleman", it is new-fashioned in manner and in method and more nearly resembles the later plays of his prime than it resembles any of his earlier compositions. In fact, this piece, which was first presented in London on May 21, 1890, with the versatile Willard in the leading rôle, may now be regarded as its author's first unquestionable contribution to the Renascence of the English Drama. In "Judah" he finally freed himself of the influence of the melodramatic school in which he had been nurtured and set forth a new type of play which was peculiarly his own.

The essential and important difference between this play and its many predecessors is that in "Judah" the characters for the first time dominate the plot. We are primarily interested in Judah Llewellyn and Vashti Dethic as human beings, rather than as puppets of the stage; and even the minor characters are more interesting as sketches from life than as mere figures in a pattern.

It is only after we have grown familiar with many of Mr. Jones's later and maturer dramas that we are able, on looking back at "Judah", to perceive how thoroughly characteristic it was of his mind. It seems to contain half a dozen of his abler plays in embryo. It sets forth, for the first

time, his favourite type of love story — a study of the love of a lofty-souled, pure-minded hero for a worldly woman who, in one way or another, is unworthy of him, — a love which leads the hero to descend first to the woman's level in order ultimately to lead her up to his own. Judah Llewellyn, the son of a Welsh father and a Jewish mother, a visionary, an idealist, an eloquent and passionate preacher, is the earliest of several high-souled heroes in clerical garb whom Mr. Jones has shown in conflict with an unidealistic world; and Vashti Dethic is the earliest of those "strange women" who, all the more alluring because, for one reason or another, they are regarded askance by conventional society, exercise their fascinations in so many of his plays. After the priestly hero, at the climax of the drama, has perjured himself for the sake of the strange woman whom he loves, we have the usual confession scene in the last act. It is also characteristic of Mr. Jones that the play should be directed against a type of impostor, personified in the father of the heroine, that in all periods has preyed upon society. The constant superstitious longing of humanity for miracle-working and for faith cures beyond the reach of reason is studied sanely but not unsympathetically. And, instead of relieving the serious action of the drama with such interjected passages of traditional stage-comedy as he had employed in his previous plays, Mr. Jones, in "Judah", used his minor characters for the first time to satirise various fads and foibles of the day. Though several of these minor characters were exaggerated to the point of caricature, they exhibited the essen-

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tial veracity of contemporary cartoons. Thoroughly characteristic of the author also is the earnestness, the passionate moral fervour, of the play. It is this quality, of course, which lifted it to literature; for, though "Judah" has been surpassed several times by Mr. Jones in his maturer years, this play clearly demonstrated, so long ago as 1890, that he had come into the theatre with a message and would have to be accepted as an authentic dramatist.

"Judah" was followed, in 1890, by a couple of comparatively negligible plays; and then, on January 15, 1891, Mr. Jones produced "The Dancing Girl", an extremely successful piece whose popularity was derived mainly from the fact that it told an unusual and very interesting story — a story that would have provided excellent material for a novel.

"THE DANCING GIRL"

In "The Dancing Girl", as in several of the previous plays of Mr. Jones, we find the stern, austere, religious father and the wayward daughter; but this heroine, Drusilla Ives, differs sharply from her predecessors in the fact that she is not led astray but deliberately goes astray. This daughter of a Quaker father is at heart a pagan; and she strenuously asserts "her right to live her own life" — a slogan which had been heard less frequently in 1891 than it has been heard in more recent years. The central figure in the play, the Duke of Guisebury, is a dissolute nobleman, lackadaisical and worthless and yet somehow likable and

fascinating; and this figure afforded an excellent character part for Beerbohm Tree. But Drusilla is not ruined by the Duke of Guisebury: it is she, instead, who ruins him, and, through her disintegrating influence upon his character, carries misery into the homes of the inhabitants of an entire island of which he is the landlord — the island where she herself had been born — and even jeopardizes the lives of a little band of explorers in the Arctic Circle.

"The Dancing Girl" culminates in a highly theatrical scene. Guisebury, planning to commit suicide within an hour, gives an extravagant party for Drusilla with the last pennies of his fortune; and, as the gaiety is at its height, her Quaker father enters and calls down a terrific curse upon her. The play reveals the ever-present moral earnestness of Mr. Jones, in his insistence upon the social responsibility of the dissolute and careless nobleman, in the regeneration of this character through social service in the final act, after his attempted suicide has been frustrated by a faithful-hearted girl who loves him, and in the expiatory death of the pagan Drusilla. But perhaps the main importance of "The Dancing Girl", as presented by Beerbohm Tree in 1891, was the fact that it was very popular in the theatre and thereby afforded Mr. Jones the means to undertake more ambitious and more hazardous experiments.

Clayton Hamilton.

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THE SILVER KING

A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

By HENRY ARTHUR JONES

AND

HENRY HERMAN

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

SCENE I. The Skittle Alley of "The Wheatsheaf," Clerkenwell.
SCENE II. Clerkenwell Close.
SCENE III. 114 Hatton Garden.

ACT II

SCENE I. Room in Denver's House.
SCENE II. A London Railway Station.
SCENE III. A Country Lane.
SCENE IV. "The Chequers," Gaddesden.
SCENE V. Room in "The Chequers."

ACT III

SCENE I. Skinner's Villa, near Bromley.
SCENE II. Nellie Denver's Home (Winter).

ACT IV

SCENE I. Library at the Lawn, Kensington Park Gardens.
SCENE II. The Grange, Gardenhurst.
SCENE III. Outside Black Brake Wharf at Rotherhithe.
SCENE IV. Black Brake Wharf, Rotherhithe.

ACT V

SCENE I. Reception Room at the Lawn.
SCENE II. Skinner's Villa.
SCENE III. The Grange.

"The Silver King" was originally produced at the Princess's Theatre, London, on November 16, 1882, under the direction of Mr. Wilson Barrett.

Original Cast

Wilfred Denver	Mr. Wilson Barrett
Nellie Denver, his Wife	Miss Eastlake
Cissy and Ned, their children	Misses M. Clitherow and C. Burton
Daniel Jaikes, their Servant	Mr. George Barrett
Frank Selwyn, Private Secretary to Mr. John Franklin	Mr. Neville Doone
Geoffrey Ware, an Engineer	Mr. Brian Darley
Samuel Baxter, a Detective	Mr. Walter Speakman
Capt. Herbert Skinner, known as "The Spider"	Mr. E. S. Willard
Henry Corkett, Geoffrey Ware's Clerk	Mr. Chas. Coote
Eliah Coombe, a Marine Store Dealer	Mr. Clifford Cooper
Cripps, a Locksmith	Mr. Frank Huntley
Mr. Parkyn, Parish Clerk of Gaddesden	Mr. J. Beauchamp
Messrs. Binks and Brownson, Tradesmen	Messrs. H. Deane and Charlford
Bilcher and Teddy, Betting Men	Messrs. Warin and C. Gurth
Tubbs, Landlord of the "Wheat-sheaf"	Mr. H. de Solla
Gaffer Pottle	Mr. J. B. Johnstone
Cabman	Mr. H. Evans
Leaker, a Porter	Mr. W. A. Elliott
Servants	Messrs. C. Crofton and Coles
Detectives	Messrs. Polhill & Bland
Porter	Mr. Besley
Newsboy	Mr. Carson
Olive Skinner, Capt. Skinner's Wife	Miss Dora Vivian
Tabitha Durden	Mrs. Huntley
Susy, Waitress at the Chequers	Miss Woodworth
Mrs. Gammage	Mrs. Beckett
Lady Passenger	Miss Nellie Palmer
Schoolgirls	Misses J. and F. Beckett

Railway Officials, Clerks, Children, Passengers.

THE SILVER KING

ACT I

SCENE 1. *The Skittle Alley at the "Wheatsheaf", Clerkenwell.*

Discover Tubbs, Teddy, Bilcher, and drinkers. Bilcher is in the midst of an excited narrative, the others are grouped round him at bar.

BILCHER. And they kept like that, neck and neck the three of 'em, till just as they were turning the corner drawing in home, and then Marcher put on a bit of a spurt, and by Jove, Blue Ribbon shot ahead like a flash of greased lightning and won by a short head. Never saw such a pretty finish in my life!

[*Enter Ware.*

WARE (*to Bilcher*). Well, what about Denver?

BILCHER (*to Ware*). Doubled up this time and no mistake. Went a smasher on Patacake and lost everything — owes me a hundred and fifty pounds besides.

WARE. Ah! (*Aside.*) It has come at last then. (*To Bilcher.*) You 're sure you've cleaned him out?

BILCHER. Oh yes, me and Braggins between us. Much obliged to you for introducing him to us.

WARE. How did he take it?

BILCHER. Oh, tried to laugh and joke it off. He 's as drunk as a fiddler; he was pretty mellow when we started this morning, and we 've kept him well doctored up all day.

WARE. That 's right. Keep him at it. Where is he?

BILCHER. We left him drinking at the bar at Waterloo Station; but he 's promised to turn up here.

WARE. I'll run in and have a look at him by and by. (*Going, aside.*) Ruined! Now, Nelly Hathaway, I think I'll show you that you made a slight mistake when you threw me over and married Wilfred Denver. [*Exit Ware.*

TUBBS. So poor young Denver came a cropper to-day?

BILCHER. Yes.

TUBBS. Poor fellow! I'm sorry for him. He's a downright good-hearted, jolly young fellow, Mr. Denver is.

TEDDY. So he is, Tubbs, when he's sober.

BILCHER. And that ain't been the last six months — Tubbs takes care of that.

[*Enter Jaikes as if looking round for somebody.*

TUBBS (*in low voice to drinkers at bar*). Look! There's Mr. Denver's old servant — he's come to look after his master.

JAIKES. What cheer, Mr. Tubbs?

TUBBS. You must give him a little extry time to-night. There's a good many public houses between Epsom and here.

JAIKES. Ah, but he'll be home early to-night; he promised the missus he would; and I want to ketch him and pop him off to bed quiet afore she sets eyes on him, d'ye see?

TUBBS. Ah, I should n't wonder if he's a bit fresh, eh?

JAIKES. Anybody might happen to get a bit fresh on Derby Day, you know.

TUBBS. He's been going it a pretty pace lately, ain't he?

JAIKES. Well, he's a bit wild, but there ain't no harm in him. Bless you, it's the blood; he's got too much nature in him, that's where it is. His father was just like him when he was a young man. Larking, hunting, drinking, fighting, steeple-chasing — any mortal spree under the sun, out all night, and as fresh as a daisy in the morning! And his grandfather, old Squire Denver, just such another. There was a man for you if you like. The last ten years of his life he

never went to bed sober one night. Yes, he did one night, when the groom locked him in the stable by mistake, and then he was ill for months afterwards.

TEDDY. Oh, he could take his lotion pretty reg'lar, eh?

JAIKES. I believe you. Well, when I was a dozen years younger, I could take my whack, and a tidy whack it was too, but, bless you, I was n't in it with old Squire Denver, and Master Will 's a chip of the old block. He 'll make a man yet.

BILCHER. He 'll make a madman if he does n't leave off drinking.

JAIKES. You let him be! He 's all right — Master Will 's all right!

[*Denver rolls in gate.*

DENVER (*very drunk*). Yes, I 'm all right — I 'm all right! I 'm 's drunk as a fool, and I 've lost every cursed ha'penny I 've got in the world. I 'm all right!

TUBBS. What, backed the wrong horse, Mr. Denver?

DENVER. No, Tubbs, no, I backed the right horse, and then the wrong horse went and won.

TEDDY. That 's a pity!

DENVER. Not a bit of it. I 've lost, you 've won — if there were no fools like me in the world, what would become of the poor rogues?

BILCHER. Well, you seem pretty merry over it.

DENVER. Yes, Bilcher. I 've lost my money to-day and to-morrow I shall lose your acquaintance. I 'm quite satisfied with the bargain.

JAIKES. What? Bad luck again, Master Will?

DENVER. The devil's own luck, Jaikes. I put everything on Patacake, and I 'm ruined, Jaikes.

JAIKES. No, Master Will, don't say that!

DENVER. Well, say stumped, cleaned out, licked into a cocked hat. Bilcher, I owe you a hundred and fifty pounds.

BILCHER. Yes, and I should like to know how I 'm to be paid.

DENVER. So should I, Bilcher!

BILCHER. Why did n't you take my advice? I told you that blackguard Braggins was doing you.

DENVER. Yes, and Braggins told me the same about you. Come, Bilcher, don't be greedy — you 've had a good picking out of me, let the other blackguards have their turn.

BILCHER. I wash my hands of you.

DENVER. Very well, Bilcher, they won't be any the worse for a good wash.

JAIKES. Come, Master Will, you 'd better come home.

DENVER. Home! What should I go home for? To show my poor wife what a drunken brute she 's got for a husband? To show my innocent children what an object they 've got for a father? No, I won't go home, I 've got no home. I 've drunk it up.

JAIKES. For mercy's sake, Master Will, don't talk like that!

DENVER (*furiously*). Get home with you!

JAIKES. Yes, I 'll go home!

DENVER (*drops his voice*). Jaikes, don't let her come here and find me like this — tell her I have n't come back — tell her I 'm not to be found — tell her any lie that comes handiest, but don't let her see me. Be off now, be off!

JAIKES (*going*). Poor Master Will! Ruined! What 'll become of poor missus and the dear little 'uns?

[*Exit. Baxter has entered.*

DENVER (*takes out revolver*). There 's always one way out of it. And if it was n't such a coward's trick I 'd do it.

BAXTER (*in a low voice to Denver*). If you don't know what to do with that, I 'll take care of it for you.

DENVER (*putting revolver in pocket again*). Thank you, I do know what to do with it, much obliged for your advice. (*Aside.*) I may want it, to-night.

[*Baxter looks after him, shrugs his shoulders, goes*

to table and picks up newspaper. Coombe enters directly after Baxter. Enter Henry Corkett, a young cockney clerk, flushed, swaggering, cigar in mouth, hat on one side.

CORKETT (*with patronising wave of hand to Tubbs*). Ha, Tubbs, how do?

TUBBS. How do, 'Arry?

CORKETT. 'Enery Corkett, Esquire, from you, Tubbs, if you please. What do you think of that, Tubbs, eh? (*Flourishing a roll of bank notes.*) Backed Blue Ribbon for a win and a place, and landed five hundred pounds. Look there!

[*Flourishing notes.*

DENVER. Biggest fools, best luck!

CORKETT (*turning round angrily*). What did you say?

DENVER. I said I wished I'd got no brains, because then I could make money at horse-racing.

CORKETT. Oh, it's you, is it, Mr. Denver? I've seen you at my guv'nor's place in Hatton Garden. You know me. My name's Corkett — I'm Mr. Ware's clerk.

COOMBE (*aside*). Mr. Ware's clerk!

DENVER (*after staring at him a moment*). No, beg pardon, but I don't know you.

BAXTER (*aside, seeing Coombe*). Mr. Eliah Coombe! Any little game on to-night, I wonder? A glass of bitter.

CORKETT. Bitter be blowed! Have some champagne. Tubbs, it's my shout. Champagne for everybody.

COOMBE (*aside, watching Corkett*). Mr. Ware's clerk. If I could get hold of him it would make our little job easy to-night.

[*Rises and goes up to Skittle Alley with drink.*

CORKETT. Come, gentlemen all, drink my health!

DENVER. Certainly! (*Raising his glass.*) Here's to the health of the beggars that win — put them on horseback and let them ride to the devil!

TUBBS (*to Corkett*). Don't take any notice of him. He's been hard hit at the Derby to-day.

CORKETT. Look here, gentlemen, I'm fly. Hang the expense!

BAXTER. You young ass, put those notes in your pocket and go home to bed.

CORKETT (*turns sharply around*). Shan't! Who are you? Can you show as much money as that? No! Then you shut up and take a back seat. I've won my money fair and honest and I shall spend it how I like. Hang it, I shall light my pipe with it if I like. Give me a cigar, Tubbs.

[*Tubbs gives him cigar. Corkett strikes match.*

CORKETT (*to Baxter*). There! That's a five-pound note. (*Lights the note with match and then lights cigar with note.*) There, that'll show you what I'm made of? I'm a gentleman, I am. Money ain't no object to me.

DENVER (*aside*). That fool with five hundred pounds, and to-morrow my wife and children will be starving. (*To Corkett.*) Look here you! You've got more money than you know what to do with; I'll have you at any game you like — for any stake.

CORKETT. I don't want your money.

DENVER. But I want yours! If you've got the pluck of a rabbit, stake it, win or lose.

CORKETT. Very well, what shall it be?

DENVER. Cards, billiards — I don't care.

CORKETT. Fifty up then — I'm ready!

DENVER. Come on, then. Hang it all, my luck must change! It shall change! I will win or the devil's in it!

[*Exit Denver.*

CORKETT. Come on, gentlemen, and see the fun!

[*Exit, followed by several of the drinkers, leaving only one or two at bar.*

COOMBE (*aside*). The Spider at last!

[*Enter Skinner. Very well dressed. Light summer overcoat and faultless evening dress.*

BAXTER (*aside*). The Spider and Coombe. There 's some big game on to-night.

SKINNER (*glancing round*). Baxter the detective! The deuce! (*Goes to him.*) Anything fresh in the paper?

BAXTER. Blue Ribbon pulled it off to-day.

SKINNER. Ah, I don't bet.

BAXTER. They 've caught the man who committed the jewel robbery at Lady Fairford 's. (*Giving him paper and indicating paragraph.*) It may interest you; it seems he was quite a swell, as well dressed as you are.

SKINNER. Was he? The cheek of these fellows!

BAXTER. You 're right — they are cheeky!

[*Looks straight at Skinner for some moments. Skinner's face remains perfectly impassive.*

BAXTER (*aside*). A cucumber is n't in it with him.

COOMBE (*to Skinner*). My dear boy, I 'm so glad you 've come.

SKINNER (*in a low voice without taking his eyes off the paper*). If you accost me again in a public place, I 'll wring your neck for you, you old weasel!

COOMBE. My dear boy, business is business, and it 's a big fortune for us all — a sackful of diamonds in Hatton Garden — no risk — no danger, all as safe and easy as saying your prayers.

SKINNER. How do we get in?

COOMBE. Cut through the wall of the next house. There 's a young chap playing billiards inside —

SKINNER. Will you hold your infernal cackle? Don't you see that man watching us? It 's Baxter the detective.

COOMBE (*alarmed*). Baxter the detective?

SKINNER. Yes, you fool, don't look at him. He means to follow me up. I 'll throw him off the scent directly.

[*Re-enter Corkett, followed by drinkers.*

CORKETT (*elated*). Landed him proper, did n't I? Ha, Tubbs, pulled it off again, my boy!

TUBBS. What — have you won, 'Arry?

CORKETT. Rather! Why, he was n't in it.

COOMBE (*aside to Spider*). See that young sprig there — he sleeps in the house we want to get into — if we could get hold of him —

SKINNER. Will you shut up?

CORKETT. Now, gentlemen, let 's be merry! Drink up! Look here, I 've made my money like a gentleman and I 'll spend it like a gentleman.

SKINNER. Just relieve him of those notes while I draw off Baxter's attention. You 'll be able to get hold of him when he 's cleaned out.

COOMBE. You 'll be there as soon as it 's dusk — a hundred and fourteen, Hatton Garden.

SKINNER. Where 's the Ancient Briton?

COOMBE. He 'll be on the spot.

SKINNER. Right! So you want to have a finger in our pie, do you, Sam Baxter? (*Seeing that Baxter is cautiously following him.*) That 's right! Follow me up! I 'll lead you a pretty dance to-night. (*Shouts off.*) Hi! Boy! Get me a hansom!

[*Exeunt Skinner and Baxter. Coombe has in the meantime picked Corkett's pocket.*

CORKETT. Now, gentlemen, I 'm blowed if I don't stand you another bottle of champagne. I 've got money enough — (*Stops short suddenly.*) Here, somebody 's stole my money.

TUBBS. What? Nonsense! 'Enery, there ain't no thieves here. Feel again.

CORKETT (*feeling desperately in his pockets*). Yes, it 's gone. It 's gone. My money — I 'm robbed, I 'm ruined! I 'm ruined! Give me my money, do you hear — give me my money or I 'll —

[*Seizes Bilcher, who happens to stand next to him, by the throat.*

BILCHER (*shaking him off roughly*). You hold off, youngster, or I 'll smash you. I have n't got your money.

CORKETT. Somebody's got it! Somebody must have it!

COOMBE. Come, gentlemen, no larks with the poor young fellow. If you've got his money give it back to him!

CORKETT (*crying piteously*). I'm ruined, you know, I'm ruined!

COOMBE (*suddenly*). Why, of course, that man must have it.

CORKETT. Which?

[*Runs to Coombe.*

COOMBE. Why, the man with the billy-cock hat and check trousers! (*Describing Baxter.*) I saw him sneaking round your elbow — he's got it.

CORKETT. Which way did he go?

COOMBE. This way — come on! I'll help you catch him — I shall know the rascal again when I see him — come on!

CORKETT. Come on, gentlemen, and help me find him. I'm ruined. I'm ruined.

[*Crying piteously.*

[*Exit Coombe, followed by Corkett. Enter Denver.*

DENVER. There's another man ruined. Cheer up! We'll go to the dogs together. Tubbs, give me some brandy.

TUBBS. You've had enough, Mr. Denver.

DENVER. I'm the best judge of that — it's a free country — anybody can drink himself to death that likes — I will have it, I will.

[*Enter Geoffrey Ware.*

WARE (*watching Denver*). Ah, there you are, my fine fellow. I think my plan is working pretty well. I think Nelly had better have married me after all. Stick to it; I'll bring you to the gutter, I'll see you in the workhouse yet before I've done with you. (*Comes up to Denver, slaps him on the back cordially.*) Well, Will, how are you?

DENVER. I'm three parts drunk and the rest mad, so keep out of my way, Geoffrey Ware.

WARE. Nonsense, Will, I never saw you looking so bright and sober. I'm very glad for Nelly's sake.

DENVER (*fiercely rising*). Whose sake?

WARE. Mrs. Denver — excuse the slip of the tongue. She was once engaged to me, you know.

DENVER. She knew better than to marry you, did n't she?

WARE. It seems she did, for she married you.

DENVER. Yes, and she 'll stick to me through thick and thin. Why, you sneaking cur, do you think my wife can't see through you? Do you think I don't know why you 're always creeping and skulking about my house under pretence of being my friend? Now listen to me; I 'm going to the dogs — I 'm drinking myself to death as fast as I can. I shall be dead in no time, but she won't marry you, Geoffrey Ware. She 'll marry a sweep sooner — you know, a sweep of the other sort I mean. Now you 've got it straight, go and chew the cud of that, and then buy a rope and hang yourself.

WARE. Come, Will, I don't bear you any grudge for taking away my sweetheart; I 'm only too glad to see what a nice, kind, sober husband she 's got.

DENVER. I 've warned you once. Take a fool's advice and keep out of my way. The devil 's in me to-night, and he 'll break out directly.

WARE. Ah, well, take care of yourself, dear boy, for my sake. Give my kindest regards to Nelly.

[*Denver rising, dashes the contents of his glass in Ware's face. Tubbs and Bilcher come down and seize Denver. Teddy gets Ware away.*

DENVER (*held by Tubbs and Bilcher*). Take that man away! Take him away before I kill him.

WARE. Ta, ta, Will, don't forget my message to your better half.

[*Exit Ware.*

TUBBS. Now, Mr. Denver, you 'd better go home, you know.

DENVER. No, no, let me stay here, Tubbs! Oh, my head!

[*Lets his head fall on table.*

TUBBS. Come away, Mr. Bilcher; perhaps he'll drop off to sleep and then we can carry him home.

DENVER. Yes, carry me home, Tubbs, and sing "See the conquering hero comes!" and then bury me and play the Dead March in Saul.

[*Tubbs has beckoned all off. Denver is alone. Nelly enters, comes down behind him very timidly; he starts, turns around and sees her.*

DENVER. Nelly, you here! You in this place?

NELLY. Yes, is n't a wife's place by her husband's side?

DENVER. Not when he's such a husband as I am. You go home, my darling; you go home; I'll come by-and-bye.

NELLY. No, my poor Will, come now!

DENVER. I've ruined you, Nell, I've lost every sixpence I've got in the world. To-morrow you and the chicks will be starving. Ah, Nell, my bonnie, bonnie girl, look at me — what made you marry me, a drunken brute like me?

NELLY. Because I loved you — I love you still. Never mind the past, dear, come home and make a fresh start to-morrow.

DENVER. I can't. I must go on. I can't stop. I'm going down, down as fast as I can go — I don't know where!

NELLY (*throwing her arms round him*). Oh, don't say that, dear. You must stop yourself for my sake — for your Nell's sake.

DENVER (*stroking her face*). The sweetest and truest wife a man ever had, and married to such a wretch as I am. (*Changing his tone.*) Don't you come here! You only make me think what a brute I've been to you.

NELLY. Oh, Will, I have just put our little Cissy and Ned to bed and they have said, "God bless dear father!"

[*Geoffrey Ware enters behind, unperceived.*

DENVER (*starting up maddened*). Ah! Don't teach them that! Don't teach them to pray for me. Teach them to curse and hate me. Go away, Nell — don't you see the people all staring at us? Go home, my girl! I 'll come home when I 'm sober. Go home, my girl, go home! (*Rushes to bar.*) Tubbs, give me some brandy, don't keep me waiting!

[*Nelly goes a step after him and then sinks into chair crying.*

WARE (*to her in low voice*). Have you suffered enough?

NELLY (*hiding her tears*). Geoffrey Ware! (*Aside.*) That he should see me here!

WARE. Has he dragged you deep enough into the mire, or will you go deeper still, to rags, to the gutter, to starvation? Nelly, you once promised to be my wife.

NELLY. Yes, and I repented even before I promised. I never loved you and you know it. You worried me into a consent, and when I found out my mistake, I told you of it and married a better man!

DENVER (*whose back is towards them*). That hound back again, and talking to my wife!

WARE. Ah, there stands the better man! Look at him. A pattern husband — a pattern father, prosperous, happy, respectable, sober!

NELLY. Oh, this is manly of you. What harm have I ever done to you?

WARE. You married him. I swore that day I 'd ruin him, and I kept my word. Good evening, Mrs. Denver.

DENVER (*turning*). Stop, you cur, and answer to me.

WARE (*coolly*). My dear fellow, you 're drunk, you know.

[*Exit laughing at Denver.*

[*Denver rushes at him. Nelly stops him.*

NELLY. Ah, Will, he 's not worth it.

[*Tubbs and others enter from house. Jaikes enters from gate.*

DENVER. Let me get at him! Let me go!

JAIKES. Master Will! Master Will!

NELLY. No, no! Will, he's not worth it.

JAIKES. What are you going to do, Master Will?

DENVER. I'm going to kill that man! I'll shoot him like a dog!

[*Breaks from them and rushes off.*

NELLY (*calling after him*). Will! Will! Stop! Ah, will nobody stop him?

[*Jaikes and Nelly go off.*

SCENE II. *A Street in Clerkenwell. Enter Coombe and Corkett.*

COOMBE. You say you don't know the numbers of the notes?

CORKETT. No, I only took 'em off the bookmaker this afternoon and I never took the numbers.

COOMBE (*aside*). That's lucky! (*Aloud.*) Well, you see the man got off with them.

CORKETT. Yes, and I say, you won't split on me, will yer? I'd borrowed that money to put it on Blue Ribbon.

COOMBE. Borrowed the money?

CORKETT. Yes, eighty pounds off my guv'nor, Mr. Ware.

COOMBE. Oh, I see, without his knowing; that's awkward — that's very awkward.

CORKETT. I'd got the straight tip — I knew Blue Ribbon was a moral, and I meant to put the money back, honor bright I did.

COOMBE. Of course you did. You was actuated by very honourable intentions.

CORKETT. And now I shall be found out to-morrow and have to go to quod.

COOMBE. Ah, that's a pity, and the worst of it is the judges are so unfeeling to parties as borrow their guv'nors' money without mentioning it to their guv-'nors.

CORKETT. Are they?

COOMBE. Oh, brutal, especially to young men as borrow their guv'nors' money to put it on horses.

CORKETT. You don't say so. I say — how long do you think I shall get?

COOMBE. Well, if you happen to get a nice, kind, feeling judge with his stomick in good working order, you may get off with, say — seven years.

CORKETT. Seven years?

COOMBE. Yes, but don't reckon on that. There was a young fellow tried at the Old Bailey a week or two since, for borrowing money as you've done, a handsome, pleasant young man he seemed to be, just like you.

CORKETT. Yes, and what did he get?

COOMBE. Fourteen years.

CORKETT (*collapses*). Fourteen years!

COOMBE. Yes, I felt quite sorry for him.

CORKETT. I say, what's it like in —

COOMBE. Speaking from hearsay, it ain't likely to suit a young man of your constitution. It'll bottle you up in less than three months.

CORKETT. Think so?

COOMBE. Sure of it. Skilly won't relish much after champagne, will it? And as for the treadmill, though it's a prime *exercise*, as a *game* it ain't to be compared to billiards.

CORKETT. What can I do?

COOMBE. Well, I've took a bit of a fancy to you, and I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll lend you the eighty pounds.

CORKETT (*seizing his hand eagerly*). You will? You're a brick!

COOMBE. Yes, providing you'll oblige me in a little matter.

CORKETT. I'll do anything for you. You're a jolly kind old man and no mistake.

COOMBE. You live at a hundred and fourteen Hatton Garden, don't you?

CORKETT. Yes.

COOMBE. Who sleeps in the house besides you?

CORKETT. Only my guv'nor and the old porter.

COOMBE. Your guv'nor spends his evenings out, don't he?

CORKETT. Comes in about twelve as a rule.

COOMBE. Well, a friend of mine wants to spend half an hour in your guv'nor's sitting-room to-night — he's a photographer and he's taking views of London. Could you let us into the house and keep the old porter out of the way?

CORKETT. I say, what's up?

COOMBE. Never mind; will you help us or will you go to quod to-morrow?

CORKETT. I'll help you.

COOMBE. There's a sensible young man.

[*Enter Jaikes, excited.*

JAIKES (*crossing*). I've lost my way in these courts and alleys and goodness knows what mischief's happening. (*Seeing Corkett.*) Ah, you're Mr. Ware's clerk, aren't you?

CORKETT. Yes. Why, it's Mr. Denver's servant, ain't it?

JAIKES. Yes, come on with me to Mr. Ware's in Hatton Garden. Come on quick.

COOMBE (*aside*). Hillo, I must stop this.

CORKETT (*exchanging a glance with Coombe*). What's the matter?

JAIKES. Murder'll be the matter if we don't stop it. My poor master's got the drink inside of him. He's beside himself, he's threatened to kill Mr. Ware. Come and help me get him away.

COOMBE. I beg your pardon, are you looking for the young gentleman as was drinking in the Wheatsheaf just now?

JAIKES. Yes, have you seen anything of him?

COOMBE. Yes, he came out of that public house not two minutes ago, and he took a cab and told the driver to go to Charing Cross Station. (*To Corkett.*) Did n't he?

CORKETT. Yes, 'ansom.

JAIKES. Are you sure it was my master?

COOMBE. Oh, quite sure. (*To Corkett.*) You 're sure it was Mr. Denver, ain't you?

CORKETT. Oh, yes, I 'll take my oath of it.

COOMBE. It 's very lucky you met us. You 'll find your master at Charing Cross Railway Station. Make haste.

JAIKES. Thank you, mate, thank you, I 'll go there straight!

[*Exit Jaikes.*

COOMBE. Yes, do, you old fool, and you won't find him. We shall have to look out and keep that tipsy fellow out of our way. (*To Corkett.*) Now, my dear boy, you stroll on just in front of me. Don't get out of my sight — That 's it!

CORKETT. No, and if I once get out of this mess I 'll never get into another.

[*Exit Corkett.*

COOMBE. That 's done neat and clean. Now if the Ancient Briton can't work in off the leads, this young gentleman will open the front door for us, and all we 've got to do is to walk upstairs.

[*Exit.*

SCENE III. *Geoffrey Ware's sitting room in Hatton Garden. Window right. Table with cloth, centre, sideboard against right wall. Door at back.*

Discover Ware standing by table with hat on, buttoning his gloves; also Leaker, an old porter, at door.

WARE. Leaker, I 'm going out; leave the door on the latch.

LEAKER. Yes, sir. Shall I wait up for you, sir?

WARE. No, I don't know what time I shall be back. I may come in in half an hour, or I may not come in at all. You can go to bed when you like. (*Going out at door.*) Good-night.

LEAKER. Good-night, sir.

[*Exit Ware at back. Leaker takes out light and exit after him.*

[*A pause. Stage dark. Cripps is seen at window; he lifts window noiselessly and enters very softly, with dark lantern in his hand.*

CRIPPS. Coast clear, that's all right! (*Moves away sideboard from wall.*) This must be the spot.

[*Listens — a short, faint, peculiar whistle is heard off. Cripps returns it and goes on lifting sideboard.*

[*Enter Skinner at back.*

SKINNER. All clear?

CRIPPS. Yes, Captain!

SKINNER. Light!

(*Cripps turns lantern on Skinner, helps him off with coat, discovers faultless evening dress-suit. Skinner turns up his sleeves.*)

Give me my tools. You'll find them in that pocket.

[*Cripps takes case out of pocket, hands it to Skinner, then puts coat on front of table. Skinner opens case and looks at tools.*

CRIPPS. Beauties, ain't they? I was a week making them jemmies.

SKINNER. Well, it was time well spent. What the plague did you want me for to-night? I was just starting for Lady Blanche Wynter's dinner party.

CRIPPS (*measuring along wall*). What the blazes has that got to do with me? If you're above your business, say so, and I'll crack the crib myself.

SKINNER (*takes from neat mahogany case a tool and lays it on table*). Give me the plan!

[*Cripps gives him the plan — he studies it.*

CRIPPS. The safe's just the other side of this wall here.

Thinks I when I was a-fixing up that there safe, "This 'll be a splendid plant for us"; and the gents next door was extry particular about having it made strong. "'Cause," says they, "there 'll often be fifty pounds worth of diamonds in that there safe."

SKINNER (*who has been studying plan and not listening to Cripps*). Shut up! Not so much cackle. Now, Cripps, look alive, because I must be at Lady Blanche's dance at twelve.

CRIPPS. Blow Lady Blanche!

[*Skinner takes up instrument, comes to wall, is about to pierce it, when noise of knocking and ringing is heard down-stairs.*

SKINNER. What 's that row?

[*Enter Coombe in great trouble.*

COOMBE. My dear boy, here 's that tipsy fellow down at the door, playing deuce and tommy; swears he 'll pull the house down if we don't let him come up.

[*Knocking and ringing continues.*

SKINNER. What 's he want?

COOMBE. Mr. Ware. He won't take our word he 's out. What can we do?

SKINNER. Send him up here.

COOMBE. What, here?

SKINNER. Yes, tell him Mr. Ware 's at home and send him up.

(*Exit Coombe.*)

Where 's my chloroform pad? Oh, here it is. (*Pours chloroform on pad.*) I 'll soon quiet him. Cripps, out with that light. Stand there!

[*Stage dark. They stand behind door.*

COOMBE (*outside*). There he is — you 'll find Mr. Ware in that room.

[*Enter Denver with revolver, followed by Coombe.*

DENVER. Now, you hound, come out and settle accounts with me. Come out and show your face. Where are you?

[*Skinner leaps out on him, and puts chloroform on pad over Denver's nose. Cripps helps him. Denver struggles, but is overpowered; they lay him on rug by fireplace.*

SKINNER. That revolver! Take it away from him; put it on the table.

(*Cripps takes revolver.*)

Lie there, you brute! You won't trouble us any more.

(*Cripps is examining revolver as Skinner crosses.*)

Put that revolver down, Cripps, anywhere on the table. Look alive! Show me a light.

[*Getting to wall again. Enter Corkett suddenly.*

CORKETT (*in a frightened whisper*). Here, where are you? I say, clear out of this, all of you. Here's my guv'nor coming back — he's left something. Oh, crimes, here he is.

[*Enter Ware. He stands a moment in doorway — strikes match. Corkett tries to dodge by him.*

WARE (*sees him*). Hillo? What are you doing here? Who are these men? What business have you here?

SKINNER. We are friends of your clerk — we met him at the Derby, and he insisted on our coming here to spend the evening with him, and so naturally as a matter of course — (*coolly putting tools in box*) — Excuse me, I have an appointment!

WARE. Wait a bit, I want this cleared up! (*Sees tools on table.*) Ah! These are burglars' tools! A revolver! Help! Murder! Thieves!

SKINNER (*snatching up revolver and shooting Ware*). Take that, you fool, since you won't be quiet!

[*Ware falls in front of table — a pause.*

COOMBE. My dear boy, this is terrible.

CORKETT. He's killed him, he's killed him!

SKINNER. Cripps, back with the case, sharp! Everybody off.

[*They put back bookcase quickly.*

CORKETT. We shall all swing for this.

[*Shows great fright.*

SKINNER. You will, if you don't keep your mouth shut.

CRIPPS. We must risk the leads — come on — we must n't be seen coming out of the door.

[*Gets out at window.*

SKINNER (*putting on coat and coolly pocketing tools*). Look alive, Coombe! Shake up that idiot!

[*Indicating Corkett who is paralysed with fright.*

COOMBE (*shaking Corkett*). Come on, or else they 'll collar you for this.

[*Hurries him out of window and gets out himself.*

SKINNER (*looking at Ware*). I've gone a step too far this time. The fool! Why would n't he let me pass!

[*Gets out of window and closes it.*

[*Stage dark. A pause. Enter Leaker with candle, rubbing his eyes and yawning as if just wakened from sleep.*

LEAKER (*yawning*). I thought I heard a noise like a shot. I must have been dreaming. I wonder how long I 've been asleep? Mr. Ware not come yet. (*Going a step or two and stumbling over Denver.*) Hillo! Who 's this? (*Stoops and looks down.*) Why, it 's Mr. Denver! How did he get in here? (*Kneels down and shouts at Denver and shakes him.*) Mr. Denver! Wake up, wake up!

(*Denver mutters something and stirs.*)

Don't lay there, sir. Let me assist you into this chair. (*Shakes him.*) Drunk again. D 'ye hear, Mr. Denver, wake up!

[*Shakes him and gets him into chair.*

DENVER (*rousing himself and opening his eyes*). All right! Don't be in a hurry. Where am I?

LEAKER. You 're in Mr. Ware's room at Hatton Garden, sir.

DENVER (*in chair*). Of course I am.

[*Passing his hand over his head, drops back into chair.*

LEAKER. Shall I light you downstairs?

DENVER. No, I'll go soon. Who is it — Leaker?

LEAKER. Yes, it's Leaker.

DENVER. You know me, Leaker?

LEAKER. Yes, I know you, sir. (*Aside.*) I'd better let him stay, he won't do any harm. (*To Denver.*) I'll leave you the candle, sir, and you can go home when you've quite woke up. Well, good-night, sir, I'm going to bed. Mind you latch the street door when you go out. Good-night, sir.

DENVER. Latch street door — all right, Leaker.

(*Exit Leaker.*)

(*Sits up and stares round him, tries to collect himself.*) What's up? What's the matter? (*Shakes himself.*) What am I doing here? This won't do! Get home! Get home, you drunken scoundrel! Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Will Denver? Keeping your poor wife sitting up half the night for you — get home, d'ye hear, get home. (*Raises himself with difficulty and stares round and staggers.*) What's the matter with my head? I can't recollect! What place is this? (*With a sudden flash of recollection.*) Ah! Geoffrey Ware's room, I remember — yes, yes, I said I'd kill him and — Oh, my head, I'd better get home. Where's my hat? (*Gets up, takes candle, staggers, steadies himself, comes round table, sees Ware.*) What's that? It's Geoffrey Ware! What's he doing here? Get up, will you? (*Kneels down.*) Ah, what's this? Blood! He's shot! My God, I've murdered him. No! No! Let me think. What happened? Ah yes, I remember now — I came in at that door, he sprang at me, and then we struggled. (*Looking at revolver.*) My revolver. One barrel fired — I've murdered him. No, he's not dead. Geoffrey Ware! Is he dead? (*Eagerly feeling Ware's pulse.*) No, it doesn't beat. (*Tears down Ware's waistcoat and shirt, puts his ear over Ware's heart.*) No, no, quite still, quite still. He's dead! Dead! Dead! Oh, I've killed him — I've

killed him. (*Rising frantically, takes up revolver and puts it in his pocket.*) What can I do? (*With a great cry.*) Don't stare at me like that! (*Snatching off table cover and throwing it over body, his eyes fixed and staring at it, unable to take off his glance.*) Close those eyes, Geoffrey — close them. Ah, yes, I murdered him — I've done it — I've done it — murdered him! I've done it! I've done it! I've done it! I've done it! I've done it!

[*Exit, his lips mechanically jabbering.*

CURTAIN

(*A night passes between Acts I and II.*)

ACT II

SCENE I. *Interior of Denver's house. Window at back. Doors right and left. Small table centre of stage. Chairs right and left. The clock strikes six.*

Nelly discovered at window, looking anxiously off.

NELLY. Six o'clock! Will he never come?

(*Enter Jaikes.*)

Well, Jaikes?

JAIKES. I can't see nothing of him, missus!

NELLY. You don't think he has carried out his threat?

JAIKES. Not he, missus, don't you fear. Mr. Will won't do no harm. Now don't you sit up any longer, missus.

NELLY. I'm used to it, Jaikes, I'm used to it.

JAIKES. This sitting up o' nights is making you quite pale and thin, and such bonny rosy cheeks as you used to have in the old days.

NELLY. Ah, the old days — the dear old Grange. The happy, happy times that will never come again.

JAIKES. Yes, it will, missus. I don't know how, but some'ut inside me prophesies as it will.

NELLY. Bless you, Jaikes, I don't know how I shall bear my troubles when you are gone.

JAIKES. When I'm what, missus?

NELLY. Gone — yes, we're ruined; we can't pay you the wages we owe you.

JAIKES. There'll be time enough for that when I asks you.

NELLY. Ah, but we can't afford to keep a servant any longer — you have clung to us all through, my old friend, but we shall have to part from you now.

JAIKES. Will you, though? You won't find me so easy to get rid of.

NELLY. Ah, Jaikes, we're a sinking ship, you'd better leave us before we go down.

JAIKES. No, missus, my voyage is pretty well over, and if you go down, I'll go down with you. I stuck to you in your prosperity — I took your wages when your purse was full, and your hand was free, and I ain't going to leave you now adversity's come and the cupboard's empty. No! No!

NELLY. Dear kind Jaikes, but you know you could go back to the Grange; they want a butler, and would be glad to have you.

JAIKES. I daresay they would, but they won't get me — I know when I'm well off.

NELLY. But I am forgetting, Jaikes, you must be very tired. Go and get some sleep.

JAIKES. I'd rather wait with you, missus.

NELLY. I'll call you, Jaikes, if I want any help. Go, Jaikes, go just to please me.

JAIKES. Very well, missus, if you wish it.

NELLY. There's a good Jaikes. Good-night.

JAIKES. Not "good-night," missus, it's "good-morning."

[*Exit Jaikes.*

NELLY. Ah! if it were the dawn of a new and happy life! (*Enter Denver.*) Will!

DENVER. Don't touch me! You don't know what I am! Keep away from me!

NELLY. Ah, Will! Not that — not that! For mercy's sake, say it's not true!

DENVER. Ah, if I could! Yes, it's true! I've killed him! Oh, if I could wipe it out! If I could bring back the past few hours! Fool! Fool! Fool!

NELLY. How did it happen?

DENVER. I don't know! I was mad — dazed. I went to his rooms, it was dark — I called out for him — he

sprang upon me from behind the door — we struggled — I suppose my revolver must have gone off — and then — I — I — I don't know what happened. The next thing I remember was Leaker, the porter, woke me and left me — and I looked round the room — and — and — (*picturing the scene*) there he was — dead — dead — shot by me. Look! Look! he's staring at me. Look! Look! He'll stare at me for ever. There! Don't you see him? (*Pointing to the floor.*) Hide him — hide him from me!

NELLY (*with a great cry of pity, goes to him and covers his face with her hands*). Oh, my poor Will!

DENVER. Don't touch me, I say! There's blood upon my hands. Oh, my poor girl! Have I brought you to this?

NELLY. Don't think of me — think of yourself — you must hide!

DENVER. Hide! No! let them them come and take me; you will be well rid of me. (*She puts her arms round his neck.*) Don't pity me. If there is a spark of love left in your breast for me, crush it out. Oh, I've been the maddest fool that was ever sent upon this earth to work mischief.

NELLY. What time was it when it happened?

DENVER. I don't know — a little before twelve, I think. I've been rushing about the streets ever since, trying to get away from him and from myself.

NELLY. You must n't stay here! This will be the first place they will search. You must go to one of the big railway stations and take a ticket for a long distance — do you see — make it appear you are trying to leave the country, and then you must leave the train at the first station, and so throw them off the scent. (*Puts her arms round Denver's neck.*) You'll do as I tell you, won't you, Will?

DENVER. Oh, my wife! Why don't you hate me? Why don't you curse me?

NELLY. Because you never had so much need of my love and of my prayers as you have now. We're wasting time. What money have you?

[*Denver feels in his pocket, takes out revolver.*

DENVER. Ah! this cursed thing! Take it away before I do any more mischief with it.

[*Nelly takes it from him.*

NELLY. Never mind that now. I'll get rid of it when you are gone. (*Puts revolver on table.*) What money have you?

DENVER. Not a shilling in the world.

NELLY. Nor I. Ah, you will be lost and all for the want of a few pounds.

[*Jaikes has entered during the last speech.*

JAIKES. No, missus, he shan't. I've saved up a little money against a rainy day, and Master Will's as welcome to it as if it was his own. But what has happened?

NELLY. Oh, the worst! Out of pity don't ask. Only help us.

JAIKES. Aye, that I will. What can I do?

NELLY. Quick, get the money. Wait! Your master must have some disguise. Think what he can have.

JAIKES. Yes, missus. There's my poor brother Frank's things. They sent 'em to me when he died. How will they do?

NELLY. Sailor's clothes! They'll do. Quick! Get them and put them into the portmanteau — and, Jaikes, his top coat and hat. Hurry, it's life or death!

(*Exit Jaikes. She goes to Denver and puts her arms around his neck.*)

Oh, Will, you must save yourself for my sake.

DENVER. I shan't escape — they'll soon run me down, Nell.

NELLY. Ah! no, no, no, you must escape! You shall! Oh, how I will pray for it this night, and you will do

your utmost for my sake? You will find means of letting me know where you are?

DENVER. Yes, and the children — my little Ned and Cissy — dare I kiss them before I go?

NELLY. Yes — come, they are asleep.

DENVER. No! No! I'm not fit to kiss them! Oh, Nelly, when they grow up and ask for their father, what will you say?

[*Bursts into tears.*

[*Enter Jaikes with overcoat, hat, portmanteau and purse.*

JAIKES. Here you are, Master Will. You'll find poor Frank's clothes inside — he was about your figure. Here's the money — there's nearly forty pounds.

[*Nelly helps Denver on with his overcoat.*

DENVER. I can't take your savings, Jaikes.

JAIKES. Don't say mine, Master Will. It all came from you — and if the last drop of blood in my old heart could save you, you should have that as well.

NELLY. Quick, dear! you must take it.

DENVER. Give me a few pounds and then I'll shift for myself. Here, you keep the rest — for her. You'll take care of her, won't you, Jaikes?

JAIKES. You need n't ask me that, Master Will.

NELLY (*throwing her arms round Denver*). Oh, Will! that ever we should part like this!

(*Loud knock at door.*)

What's that?

DENVER. They have come for me.

JAIKES (*goes to window and looks off*). A chap with a billycock hat and check trousers.

DENVER. It must be a detective. What shall I do?

NELLY. This way — quick, we'll try to keep him.

DENVER. Good-bye! Oh, my wife, forgive me! Forgive me!

NELLY. Go for your life!

(*Nelly hurries Denver off, then turns to Jaikes.*)

Jaikes, quick to your room. Look out of your window. Ask the man to wait a few minutes. Keep him as long as you can. (*Hurries Jaikes off. Sinks exhausted into chair.*) Oh, my husband! my husband!

[*Baxter enters through window. Nelly hears him and turns with a shriek.*

NELLY. Ah, what do you want?

BAXTER. Mr. Wilfred Denver — is he at home?

NELLY (*making a desperate effort to appear calm*). Yes — of course he is — he is upstairs in bed. What do you want him for?

BAXTER (*looking at her keenly*). I think you know; but if you don't, I'd rather not tell you. I must see him at once.

NELLY. Yes, on what business? Can't you tell me? I am his wife.

BAXTER. God help you then!

NELLY. Why — why? Tell me your business — I must — I will know.

BAXTER. Since you will know, I want him on a charge of murder.

NELLY. Murder! Oh, he is innocent, he'll be able to explain.

BAXTER. No doubt! I must see him at once.

NELLY. I'll tell him. Will you kindly sit down and wait a few minutes till he is dressed?

BAXTER. Mrs. Denver, forgive me, you are not telling me the truth — your husband is not in this house.

NELLY. Yes — yes, wait a few moments. What makes you think I am deceiving you? Wait — sit down, I will fetch him.

[*Second Detective rushes in.*

DETECTIVE. Here, Sam! Look alive! Our man's got away in a cab. Quick, we'll catch him!

[*Exit.*

[*Nelly throws up her arms in despair. Baxter is going, sees revolver on table, picks it up.*

BAXTER. Revolver! One barrel fired! We'll see if the bullet 'll fit it.

NELLY (*at door, clinging to Baxter*). No, no, you shan't go!

BAXTER. I must do my duty! Stand aside, Mrs. Denver, I must do my duty.

[*Exit Baxter, Nelly clinging to him and trying to stop him.*

SCENE II. *A London railway station. Inspector opens door. During scene, passengers of all classes enter from left and pass off through doors at back.*

Enter Denver hurriedly with portmanteau; he glances behind him, looks furtively round.

DENVER. They 're after me. Will they reach the station before the train starts? It 's my last chance!

[*Newspaper boy coming through door.*

BOY. Paper, sir?

DENVER. No!

BOY. Winner of the Derby, sir! Murder in Hatton Garden last night.

DENVER (*starting slightly*). Yes, give me one — any one will do.

[*Gives coin to boy and takes paper.*

INSPECTOR (*coming through doors*). Now, sir, quick if you 're going by this train. Your ticket?

(*Denver shows ticket, Inspector looks at it.*) Liverpool — front carriage next the engine. Make haste!

[*Exit Denver hurriedly through doors in flat.*

BOY. That cove 's in a big hurry. Give me a tanner — penny for the paper, fivepence for the boy.

[*Exit Boy.*

[*Enter a Tipsy Passenger.*

TIPSY PASSENGER (*going up to Inspector*). Excuse me, sir, I want to ask you a simple question.

INSPECTOR. Well, what is it?

TIPSY PASSENGER. I've got a third-class ticket for Glasgow, guv'nor. (*Produces ticket.*) Look there, you can see it's all square — what I wish to know is simply this — does that include refreshments on the road?

INSPECTOR (*angrily*). No, it don't!

TIPSY PASSENGER. All right, guv'nor, no 'fence, I hope — merely a suggestion on my part — Railway companies pr'vide r'freshments on the road. Splendid idea, old f'low! Bring you in lots of traffic.

[*Enter well-dressed Lady. Inspector leaves Tipsy Passenger and goes up to her, touches his cap very respectfully.*

INSPECTOR (*very servilely*). Can I find you a carriage, madam?

LADY. Yes. First class to Manchester.

INSPECTOR. Yes, madam. Allow me to take your rugs and umbrella.

(*Lady gives up things to Inspector.*)

Thank you — this way, madam.

[*Bows her off very respectfully.*

TIPSY PASSENGER. That's because she's a first classer. They don't show me to my carriage.

INSPECTOR (*coming to door at back, rings bell*). This way for Rugby, Stafford, Crewe, Manchester, Liverpool and the North.

[*Goes off again.*

TIPSY PASSENGER (*with much tipsy dignity*). Will you kindly conduct me to a third-class smoking carriage?

INSPECTOR (*has returned*). Third-class smoking — at end of the train.

TIPSY PASSENGER. Kindly conduct me to my carriage and open the door for me.

INSPECTOR. Get out! Go and find your carriage.

TIPSY PASSENGER. No, I will not find my carriage. I will be escorted to my carriage.

[*Inspector takes him by the scruff of the neck and runs him off.*

[*Baxter rushes on.*

BAXTER. Express gone?

INSPECTOR. Yes, three minutes ago.

BAXTER. Just my luck again. I missed the Spider last night, and now this man's missed me. (*To Inspector.*) Did you happen to notice a gentleman in a brown overcoat, brown hat, with a portmanteau?

INSPECTOR. Rather dark, with small beard and moustache?

BAXTER. Yes.

INSPECTOR. The very man. Came through this door about three minutes ago — he caught the express. He's got a first-class ticket for Liverpool. He's in the front carriage of the train.

BAXTER. Where does the train stop — the first place?

INSPECTOR. Rugby — nine thirty-five.

[*Exit Inspector.*

BAXTER (*takes out pocketbook and writes hurriedly*). "From Sam Baxter, Scotland Yard. To Police Station, Rugby. Meet nine thirty-five down express, detain Wilfred Denver — front carriage of train — about thirty, dark, small beard and moustache, brown hat, brown overcoat. Wanted for murder." I'll just nip across to the Telegraph Office, then to Scotland Yard. We shall nab him at Rugby.

[*Exit Baxter.*

SCENE III. *The exterior of The Chequers, a way-side inn with deeply recessed porch towards right. Discovered seated in the porch, drinking and smoking, Binks and Brownson, two tradesmen, and Parkyn, the Parish Clerk. Parkyn is reading the "Daily Telegraph."*

BINKS (*politely*). When you're quite finished with that paper, Mr. Parkyn.

PARKYN. When I've quite finished with it, Mr. Binks, I'll hand it over to you.

BROWNSON. Yes, Parkyn, don't be greedy. Let's all have benefit of the news.

PARKYN. I'm reading about a murder as was committed in Hatton Garden, London, last night.

BROWNSON. Ah, I like a good murder; it's very pretty reading.

BINKS. Ah! it's wonderful how tastes differ. Now my wife, she's all for divorce and breach of promise cases.

BROWNSON. So's my missus. It's my belief that women never look at a newspaper for anything except these spicy little bits.

BINKS. Well, a divorce is all very well in its way, but I say, give me a jolly good murder, one as ain't found out for a month or two, and puzzles judge and jury and everybody. That's what I like.

BROWNSON. Ah! and where you ain't quite certain it's the right man till after he's hung, eh? (*Regretfully.*) Ah! we don't get such murders nowadays.

BINKS. Have they found out who done the murder as you're reading about, Mr. Parkyn?

PARKYN. Oh, yes, a party by the name of Denver. There ain't no doubt about that.

BROWNSON. Ah, that's a pity. It takes away all the interest and excitement.

BINKS. I don't wish to hurry you, Mr. Parkyn, but when you've *quite* finished with the paper. Excuse me.

PARKYN. Don't mention it, Mr. Binks.

BINKS (*aside to Brownson*). Parkyn gets more hoggish over the paper every day.

BROWNSON. Read it out loud, Parkyn, and then we can all hear it.

PARKYN. Very well, gentlemen, if it's the wish of the company.

BINKS. I think it's my turn to read out loud to-night, Mr. Parkyn. You read out the "Horrible affair at Camberwell" last night, and the "Revolting Tragedy" the night before.

PARKYN. Well, Mr. Binks, and if I did, am I not the clerk of this parish?

BINKS. Yes, Mr. Parkyn, but because we're obliged to listen to you on Sundays when you've got us in church and we can't help ourselves, is no reason why you should bullyrag us a week-days when we've got the right of reply.

PARKYN. Perhaps you are not aware, Mr. Binks, that the Lord Bishop of this diocese has particularly admired my reading of the psalms.

BINKS. Very likely, Mr. Parkyn, but then the psalms is one thing and "The Daily Telegraph" another.

PARKYN. Gentlemen, I'm in your hands.

BROWNSON. Go on, Mr. Parkyn, read out — let's hear all about this murder.

PARKYN. Mr. Binks, you are in a minority. (*Coughs, adjusts his spectacles, looks severely at Binks and begins.*) "A Downward Career."

BROWNSON. Wait a bit, let's fill up our glasses and then we can start comfortable. (*Calls.*) Susy! Susy, my dear!

[*Enter Susy from house.*

SUSY. Did you call, sir?

BROWNSON (*giving her his glass*). As per usual, my dear.

[*Susy takes glass and exit.*

PARKYN (*reading*). "A Downward Career. Last night a shocking murder was committed at 114 Hatton Garden. The victim was a young engineer named Geoffry Ware, who occupied the first and second floors of the house in question. It appears that a few minutes before eleven last night, James Leaker, the porter, and the housekeeper of the premises, went into Mr. Ware's room, and found there an acquaintance of the deceased, by name Wilfred Denver."

[*Enter Susy with glass of grog which she places in front of Brownson.*

SUSY. Hot or cold, Mr. Brownson?

PARKYN. If you interrupt, Susy, it's impossible for me to read.

[*Denver limps on in travel-stained sailor's dress, haggard and lame — he is clean-shaven and appears utterly prostrate and exhausted.*

DENVER (*aside*). I can't drag a step further. Let them come and take me and end it.

[*Gets to porch and sinks on seat.*

PARKYN (*resuming*). "And found there an acquaintance of the deceased, by name Wilfred Denver."

[*Denver starts up as if shot, glances fiercely round at all of them.*

DENVER. Well!

[*They all stare round at him.*

BROWNSON. What's the matter, mate?

DENVER (*recovering himself*). Nothing — I beg pardon, gentlemen — I was thinking of something else. Don't take any notice of me.

[*Sits.*

BROWNSON. Go on, Mr. Parkyn.

PARKYN (*resuming*). "Wilfred Denver, a young fellow of good connections, who has lately been leading a life of gambling and dissipation and who had returned from the Derby in a drunken frenzy, aggravated it is said by heavy betting losses."

DENVER (*starting up fiercely and calling*). Waiter! Waiter!

PARKYN (*looking at him severely over his spectacles*). I really cannot read, sir, if you interrupt.

DENVER (*savagely*). Who asked you to read? Keep your tongue quiet for a few minutes, can't you?

[*Parkyn puts down paper in disgust; Binks and Brownson snatch it up and read. Enter Susy from house.*

SUSY. Did you call, sir?

DENVER. Yes, something to eat. Anything there is in the house. Lay it in a private room.

SUSY. Yes, sir.

[*Exit into house.*

BROWNSON. Have they caught the man?

[*Denver listens attentively.*

BINKS. No, but the police are after him. Here's a description of him. "About thirty, medium height, well-built, clean-cut features, with dissipated look; a small beard and moustache."

PARKYN. Poor fellow, I wonder how he feels to-night.

BROWNSON. Ah! I should n't like to be in his shoes.

DENVER. Are you talking about the Hatton Garden murder?

PARKYN. Yes, sir, we are!

DENVER. Ah! I know Hatton Garden very well. Have they discovered anything fresh?

BINKS. No, that 's only the morning paper. The evening paper ain't come yet.

DENVER. It is to be hoped they 'll catch the man before long.

PARKYN. Oh, I expect they 'll soon run him down.

DENVER. Yes, I expect so. (*Aside.*) I shall betray myself in another moment.

BINKS (*to Denver*). Stranger in these parts, mate?

DENVER. Yes — no — I know them a little.

BINKS (*noticing his clothes*). Sailor, eh?

DENVER. Yes.

PARKYN. Where might you be making for, sir?

DENVER. I'm going to join my ship.

BROWNSON. And where might that be, mate?

DENVER. She 's at — at — at — (*Starting up furiously.*) What the devil 's that got to do with you? (*Shouts.*) Waiter! Waiter! (*Enter Susy from house.*) Show me to a private room where these men can't pester me.

[*Exeunt Denver and Susy into house.*

PARKYN (*rising*). Pester him! Why, what's the matter with the man?

BINKS (*rising*). Pester him indeed! I wonder who he is?

[*Looking after him.*

PARKYN. He's a madman, that's what he is. Did you notice how he stared at us?

BROWNSON. Perhaps he has escaped from somewhere.

BINKS. Let's go in and put Mrs. Buddens on her guard. He's a dangerous character to have about the house.

BROWNSON. Yes, come on, Mr. Parkyn, we may find out something more about him.

[*Exeunt all into house.*

[*Rapid change to interior.*

SCENE IV. *Room in The Chequers.*

Discover Denver hanging cap on peg. Susy right of table laying cloth.

Music to begin.

SUSY. You look tired.

DENVER (*getting left of table*). Yes, my girl, I am.

SUSY. What's the matter with your foot?

DENVER. Nothing.

SUSY. That's a fib — you're quite lame.

DENVER. No, no, I've walked a good bit to-day and I'm dead beat.

SUSY. Never mind, you'll be better to-morrow.

DENVER. Yes, I shall be better to-morrow. Bring me some water, will you?

SUSY. Yes — anything else?

DENVER. You get the London evening paper here?

SUSY. Yes; it generally comes about this time.

DENVER. Let me have it the moment it comes. (*Aside.*) I can't help what they suspect, I must know.

(*Susy is looking compassionately at him.*)

Don't look at me, there 's a good girl, go out — shut the door, and don't let me be disturbed.

SUSY (*going out, aside*). Poor fellow, I wonder who he is.

[*Exit, leaving the door open.*

DENVER. How long will it last? I wonder if anyone saw me jump from the train. What a fearful jump! What a mercy I was n't dashed to pieces. I wonder what time it is. It must be about a quarter past eight. A quarter past eight. And yesterday at this time I was innocent! Yesterday he was alive — and I could laugh and play the fool — and now! O God! put back Thy universe and give me yesterday! Too late! Too late! Ah, my wife, how thoughtful she was! Shall I ever see her again — and my children — Ah, Heaven, work out some way of escape for me — not for my own sake, not to shield me from the just consequences of my crime, but for the sake of my dear wife and innocent children who have never done any wrong. Spare me till I have made atonement for the evil I have done. (*Looks round.*) I wonder where I am? I must have dragged at least twenty miles to-day. (*Sees railway time-table.*) Ah, a railway time-table; then there is a station somewhere near.

[*Crosses and gets time-table and returns to table and sits.*

[*Enter Susy with water.*

SUSY (*pouring out water*). There you are!

DENVER. Thank you, my girl.

[*Drinks.*

SUSY. You ain't a bit like a sailor.

DENVER. Why not? What makes you think that?

SUSY. Sailors are always hearty and jolly, and want to kiss me. (*Pauses.*) I know you 've hurt your foot — I wish you 'd let John the ostler see it — he 's as good as a doctor for sprains, and he 'll tell you what to bathe it with.

DENVER. No — no — let me alone, that 's all I want, and don't forget the evening paper.

SUSY. Very well, you shall have it the moment it comes. [*Exit, leaving door open.*

DENVER. I can't eat, and yet I must — I must put some strength into me. I can't last out another day like this.

(*Parkyn and Brownson talk outside. Denver sees the door open, limps up to it and is about to shut it when his attention is arrested.*)

Hark! What are they talking about in there?

PARKYN (*voice heard outside*). I never heard sentence of death passed but once, and that was when I was a boy, but I shall never forget it.

BINKS. (*outside*). Tell us all about it, Mr. Parkyn.

PARKYN (*outside*). Well! It was on James Beecroft, the Aylesbury murderer; and the jury had been over two hours deliberating and it was late at night, and the court was lighted with candles in them days. And one of the candles was burnt down to the socket and kept on drip, drip, drip on my shoulder; and I could n't stir, for we was packed as tight as herrings in a barrel; and the jury came out and everybody was as quiet as death; and the foreman of the jury gave in the verdict, and that candle went out the very moment as he said "Guilty." And the man's wife was in court and she screamed out to the judge to save her husband, and they had to drag her out of court, and she was carried out shrieking like a mad thing. And the judge was sobbing like a baby and when the court had got quiet again, the judge took out the Black Cap —

[*Denver slams the door furiously.*

DENVER. God! I can bear it no longer. Have mercy upon me and end it now. (*Comes down centre. Enter Susy with paper. He stares at her.*) Well?

SUSY. Paper, sir.

[*Denver takes paper from her mechanically and watches her out of room. She delays her exit a moment, looking at him. The moment she has gone, he opens the paper and with feverish haste looks up and down it.*

DENVER. What's this? "Terrible railway calamity. Seven thirty-five express from Euston—" that's the train I was in—(*reading breathlessly*)—"ascending an incline, came into collision with some detached wagons of a goods train descending the incline on the same line of rail—one of the wagons was loaded with petroleum—the barrels burst with the shock, the vapour of the oil came in contact with the engine fire and in a moment the front part of the train was wrapped in fierce and inextinguishable flames. The three front carriages, with all their occupants, were burning for upwards of an hour and were unapproachable on account of the intense heat. Nothing was left of them but cinders. Amongst the ill-fated passengers was Wilfred Denver—who committed the murder in Hatton Garden last night—" What's this?—"and who has thus paid the last penalty of his crime in the very act of flying from justice." (*Reads again.*) "Amongst the ill-fated passengers was Wilfred Denver—" Yes it is here!—"paid the last penalty of his crime." Then I am dead—dead to all the world. Dead! Yes, dead! (*Kneels.*) Merciful Father, Thou hast heard my prayer and given me my life. I take it to give it back to Thee. My wife! She will see this and think me dead. Ah! better so, better so than to be tied to a murderer! (*Rises.*) Yes, my darling, I have done you harm enough! Now I will set you free.

(*Enter Susy.*)

How far is it to the station?

SUSY. A mile, sir.

DENVER. There is a late train down to Bristol, is there not?

SUSY. Yes, sir, the down night mail.

DENVER. Order a horse and conveyance to meet it at once.

SUSY. Yes, sir.

[*Exit.*

DENVER. I shall reach Bristol to-night — Wilfred Denver is dead! To-morrow I begin a new life!

CURTAIN

(*Three years and six months pass between Acts II and III.*)

ACT III

SCENE I. *Skinner's villa at Bromley. A very luxuriously furnished apartment. Door right, window at back showing a snowy landscape outside. Fireplace right, with large comfortable fire burning. Door at left.*

Discover Olive Skinner at window looking out. Skinner is seated in a luxurious arm-chair near fire. He is reading a French novel.

OLIVE. More snow! Herbert, you don't really mean to turn that poor woman and her children out of that wretched cottage?

SKINNER. Yes, I do!

OLIVE. Why?

SKINNER. They are starving, one of the children is dying. I object to people starving and dying on my property.

OLIVE. But what will they do? Where will they go?

SKINNER. There's a nice comfortable workhouse about two miles off.

OLIVE. But surely, Herbert—

SKINNER. Now don't argue, Olive, the woman can't pay her rent—she must go!

OLIVE. But it isn't her fault she is poor.

SKINNER. Fault! It's no fault in England to be poor. It's a crime. That's the reason I'm rich.

OLIVE. Rich? When I think how our money is got, I grudge the poorest labourer's wife her crust of bread and drink of water.

SKINNER. Ah, that's foolish. My dear Olive, all living creatures prey upon one another. The duck gobbles up the worm, the man gobbles up the duck, and then the worm gobbles up the man again. It's the great law

of nature. My profession is just as good as any other, till I 'm found out.

OLIVE. When you talk like that I hate you. Your profession, indeed! Burglary and (*in a whisper*) murder!

SKINNER (*starts up with a frightened look and seizes her by wrist*). If you remind me of that cursed affair again I 'll — I 'll — (*Dropping her hand.*) There, don't be a fool, Olive, don't do it again, there 's a good girl.

OLIVE. You 're not quite deaf to the voice of conscience, it seems.

SKINNER. I wish to goodness I could be deaf to your voice occasionally.

OLIVE. Herbert, can't you make some reparation, can you not do something to wipe the stain off that man's memory?

SKINNER. No, I can't! Shut up! What a fool I was to tell you.

OLIVE. Do you think I would have let you tell me if I had guessed what your secret was? I 've not had one peaceful moment since.

SKINNER. No, and what 's more, you have n't let me have one either. For Heaven's sake, Olive, don't look like that, or you 'll be old and ugly in no time. Let 's forget the cursed thing.

(*Enter Servant. To Servant, his manner entirely changed.*)

They 've come?

SERVANT. Yes, sir.

SKINNER. Send them up.

(*Exit Servant. Olive rises and is going out.*)

You 'd better stay — one must be polite to one's business acquaintances.

[*Enter Servant showing in Coombe and Cripps. Exit Servant.*

COOMBE (*to Skinner*). My dear boy! (*To Olive.*) How d' ye do, ma'am?

[*He holds out his hand to Olive; she shrinks from taking it. Skinner throws her a look of command; she then shakes hands with Coombe.*

CRIPPS (*is smoking a short pipe, does not take off his hat, nods familiarly to Olive*). My respects ma'am. (*Looks round the room.*) Spider, this is a blazing snug crib you have got here.

SKINNER. Yes, pretty well. By the way, Cripps, I wish you'd be a little more careful in your selection of adjectives.

CRIPPS. What's the matter with my adjectives? Them as don't like my company can leave it.

OLIVE. Then there's no occasion for me to stay, I think. [*Exit Olive.*

CRIPPS (*seated in easy-chair stretching out his legs and smoking short pipe*). Not a bit, ma'am. No offence to you, but I hates a parcel of women folk poking their noses where they ain't wanted. There! That's what I call business. There ain't no nonsense about me.

SKINNER. No, nor any superfluous politeness.

CRIPPS. I hates politeness. I hates folks as are civil and stuck up.

SKINNER. My dear fellow, consider the dignity of our profession. There's no reason why we should n't be gentlemen.

CRIPPS. Gentlemen! There's nothing of the gentleman about me.

SKINNER. Hush, don't tell us so, or we shall begin to believe it by-and-bye.

COOMBE. Now, my dear boys, let's get to business.

SKINNER. Fire away, Father Christmas! I'm all attention; but before we set out for fresh woods and pastures new, let's square Lady Blanche's diamonds. Where are they?

COOMBE. Down at my wharf by the river along with the other swag.

SKINNER. Who looks after that place now?

COOMBE. It's locked up at present.

SKINNER. That won't do, you know — you must keep somebody there — somebody you know.

COOMBE. You can't spare one of your people, I suppose?

SKINNER. No, I'm very comfortably suited just now. My coachman has just done eighteen months; my cook's a jewel — she's the one that stole Lord Farthinghoe's silver — I always like to encourage enterprise. My housemaid was born in Durham jail, and my footman I took out of charity when his father went to do his fourteen years. In fact, I haven't a soul about the place that I can't trust.

[*Enter Servant.*

SERVANT. The Duke of New York's below, sir.

SKINNER. That fellow! Give him a bit of dinner and kick him out of the place.

SERVANT. He says he must see you, sir.

SKINNER (*shrugs his shoulders*). Send him up.

SERVANT. Here he is, sir.

[*Enter Corkett, seedy, half-starved, dirty, shivering, unshorn, ragged, his hair cropped as if just out of prison. Exit Servant.*

COOMBE. Dear me! Why, it's our dear old friend, Mr. 'Enery Corkett.

CORKETT. Your old friend. A pretty hole you let your friends into.

COOMBE. My dear boy, what was we to do? Why, it might have happened to any of us.

CORKETT. All my eye, Father Christmas. You were wide oh, you three, and you meant to let me in. There's Spider there. (*Goes to Skinner.*) Now then, Mr. Spider, can't you speak to an old pal?

SKINNER. So! you're out again, are you?

CORKETT. Yes, I've just done the twelve months as you ought to have done.

SKINNER. Very well, don't brag about it and perhaps you'll get another twelve months.

CORKETT. Oh no, I shan't, I 'm going to turn honest.

SKINNER. Very well — you make an infernally bad rogue, Corkett — I don't know how you 'll answer in the other line. My private opinion is you won't be a credit to either.

CORKETT. I ain't going to be your tool and cat's-paw any longer.

SKINNER. Very well.

CORKETT. Here you are living in bang-up style, surrounded by every luxury.

SKINNER. The fruits of years of honourable industry.

CORKETT. While I ain't got the price of a glass of bitter.

SKINNER. Try a few bitter reflections.

CORKETT. No, I shan't! I shall try honesty.

SKINNER. Do — it 's always the last resource of people who fail as rogues.

CORKETT. And mind you, Spider, once I do turn honest, I shall turn damned honest, and make it jolly hot for all of you.

COOMBE. Come, come, you know what the Spider is; you must brush him the right way of the wool. Now we 've got a splendid plant on, ain't we, Spider, and he shall stand in.

SKINNER. No, I 'm d——d if he shall.

COOMBE (*aside to Skinner*). My dear boy, we must keep his mouth shut or else he 'll go and blab about that Hatton Garden affair.

SKINNER. Corkett! Corkett! I 'm not to be bullied, but if you behave yourself, I don't mind doing something for you.

CORKETT. All right, I 'm fly! Let 's have some dinner to start with. I 've got rats inside of me. What time do you dine, Spider?

SKINNER. Seven. But pray don't wait for me.

[*Rings.*

CORKETT. I won't; I 'll have some lunch now, and then I 'll dine with you by-and-bye.

SKINNER. We always dress for dinner. Mrs. Skinner makes a point of it.

CORKETT. Very sorry, Spider, I've left my dress togs with my uncle. You'll have to excuse morning dress this time.

[*Enter Servant.*

SKINNER. Some lunch for this gentleman.

CORKETT. And some wine, Spider.

SKINNER. Some claret for the gentleman.

CORKETT. Claret be blowed. Let's have some champagne.

SKINNER. Some champagne for the gentleman.

CRIPPS (*rising*). I think I'll join the gentleman. I've had one dinner, but mine's a wonderful accommodating sort of stomach.

[*Exeunt Servant and Cripps.*

CORKETT. Au revoir, (*going*) — Spider — meet you at dinner. Seven, I think you said. (*Aside.*) If I can't take it out of Spider, I'll take it out of his champagne.

[*Exit Corkett.*

SKINNER. The brute! If he gets a spoonful of wine into him, it'll fly into the place where his brains ought to be, and he may open his mouth too wide. Coombe, you'd better go and look after him.

COOMBE. All right, my dear boy. Anything for an honest living.

[*Exit Coombe.*

SKINNER. That cursed Corkett turned up again! Am I always to be reminded of that? I wish they'd all die. I'll cut the whole gang after my next *coup*, disappear, retire to some quiet country place, go to church regularly, turn churchwarden and set an example to all the parish.

[*Enter Olive, showing in Nelly. She is haggard, pale and very poorly dressed.*

OLIVE (*to Nelly*). Come in. Here is my husband — you shall speak to him yourself.

SKINNER. What is it now? Do shut that door.
(*Nelly shuts door.*)
What is it?

OLIVE. This is the poor woman who lives in the gardener's old cottage.

NELLY. Mercy, sir, mercy on a starving woman and a dying child.

SKINNER. My good woman, you'll be much better off in the workhouse. You will be provided with food and your child will be attended by a doctor.

NELLY. But he will die — it will kill him to move him this bitter weather. Have mercy, sir, have mercy!

SKINNER. Now please don't make a scene. I've made up my mind to pull down that cottage. It isn't fit for a dog to live in.

NELLY. Then let me live in it, and my children, only for a few days — only till my child is better — or dead.

SKINNER. Yes, that's just it! Your child may die — and I don't wish him to die on my property, a hundred yards from my door. I dislike death, it's a nuisance, and I don't wish to be reminded of it.

NELLY. Ah, but think of it, it's the last chance for my child. If you turn us out to-night, my boy will die.

OLIVE. Oh, Herbert, think what you are doing!

NELLY. Oh, thank you for that. Beg him to let me stay.

OLIVE. I have no influence over my husband.

SKINNER (*to Nelly*). Have the goodness to believe I mean what I say.
(*Nelly kneels to him.*)
Now get up, there's no need to kneel to me.

NELLY. Yes! yes! there is much need. You shall not say me no. Oh, I'm sure you are good and kind at heart — you do not wish my boy, my brave, beautiful boy, to die. Ah, you are listening — you will have mercy — yes, yes, yes!

SKINNER (*after a pause*). Very well. If you don't bother me any more, you can stay until your child gets better.

NELLY (*rises*). God bless you! God bless you!

SKINNER. Yes, we know all about that. Now go away and don't make any more fuss.

NELLY. Oh, but I can't help thanking you and — you too (*turning to Olive*), with my whole heart.

SKINNER. There, that 'll do. Olive, show the woman out.

OLIVE. Will you come this way, Mrs. — I don't know your name.

NELLY. My name is — Nelly. (*To Skinner.*) Thank you again and again. You have saved my child's life.

[*Exeunt Olive and Nelly.*

[*Coombe enters almost instantaneously, looking frightened.*

SKINNER. What 's the matter now?

COOMBE (*pointing out after Nelly*). That woman! That woman!

SKINNER. Well, what of her? What 's the matter, man? Have you seen a ghost?

COOMBE. I knew her again in a moment.

SKINNER. Who is she?

COOMBE. Denver's widow.

SKINNER. You must be mistaken. How do you know her?

COOMBE. They pointed her out to me at the inquest on Ware's body. I 'm not likely to forget her.

SKINNER (*aside*). That man's widow here at my door. (*Stands pale and speechless, for a few moments, then in a low, hoarse voice speaks to Coombe.*) Coombe, you can do this job for me.

COOMBE. What? What?

SKINNER. My wife has got a maggot in her brain about that Hatton Garden — accident. If she finds out that this woman is Denver's widow, she 'll make my life a purgatory and the whole business 'll leak out.

COOMBE. What 's to be done?

SKINNER. She 's living in that old tumble-down cottage of mine — you know. She can't pay her rent — she 's had notice to quit for the last fortnight — go and get

some men and turn her and her belongings out of my place.

COOMBE. All right, leave it to me.

SKINNER. Do it at once.

COOMBE. It 's done.

[*Exit.*

SKINNER. Denver's widow! Lucky I found it out and can bundle them out. They can do their starving somewhere else — they shan't do it on my property.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II. *Nelly Denver's home. Winter. Cottage interior and schoolhouse.*

Enter Nelly from the inner room of the cottage. She pauses at the door and looks in again, speaking as she looks.

NELLY. Sleep on, my darling boy! You are happier so. You do not feel you are hungry, and you do not tear your poor mother's heart by begging for the food she has not got to give.

[*Enter Jaikes through stile, with bundle of sticks and some coal in an old sack. He is beating himself to keep warm.*

JAIKES. This is a freezer and no mistake.

[*Enters cottage.*

NELLY (*eagerly*). Well, Jaikes, any success?

JAIKES. Success, missus, rather! Things is looking up. What do you think? I've been and earned a shilling this afternoon.

NELLY (*joyfully*). A shilling, Jaikes?

JAIKES. Yes, a whole shilling, straight off! Earned it all in a couple of hours. There it is!

[*Puts shilling on table.*

NELLY. Oh, Jaikes, is n't that lucky! I was just wondering whether we should have anything to eat to-night.

JAIKES. Eat! Lor' bless you, we 'll have a reg'lar Lord Mayor's banquet. What did the gentleman say about letting us stay on?

NELLY. At first he was very hard and cruel and said we must go, but I went down on my knees to him and begged so hard and would n't take "no," till he was obliged to say we might stay till Ned was better.

JAIKES. Bless your sweet, pale face, missus, he must have had a heart made of brickbats if he could have said "no" to you.

NELLY. And so you see we have n't got to turn out after all, Jaikes.

(*Jaikes begins to put on sticks and lay fire.*)

You have brought some wood and some coals?

JAIKES. Yes; you see it gets a bit chilly towards the evening, and I thought a fire 'ud look cheerful.

NELLY. Where did you get the firing from, Jaikes?

JAIKES. I begged it off Bodgers the baker.

NELLY. Bodgers the baker — that dreadful hard-hearted man?

JAIKES. Oh, Bodgers is all right once you get the right side of him, though judging from Bodgers's squint you 'd think he was capable of anything.

NELLY. And how did you manage to get the soft side of him?

JAIKES. Well, I went to work artful; you see, Bodgers's missus is a regular downright tartar.

NELLY. Is she?

JAIKES. Oh, yes, she leads Bodgers a dreadful life. It 's no wonder he squints with such a wife as he 's got. Well I hangs about the bakehouse and sympathises with Bodgers, and says all the hard things as I could invent about womenkind. Oh, I laid it on thick!

NELLY. But you did n't mean it, Jaikes?

JAIKES. Not I, missus. My private opinion of women is as they 're angels, you in particular, missus. Well, I kept on helping Bodgers and a sympathising with him,

and Bodgers, he says, "I know what you're after, you old vagabond," says he.

NELLY. He called you an old vagabond?

JAIKES. Yes, but I didn't take no notice of that.

NELLY. No, put it down to his ignorance.

JAIKES. Yes, that's what I did. "You're after a job, you old scarecrow," says he. "Now be off! Get out, 'cos I shan't employ you"; and he takes a shilling out of the till and chucks it down at me, and I picks it up and I says, "I takes it, Mr. Bodgers, just to show the respect I've got for you, and 'cos I know you'd be offended if I didn't."

NELLY. That was clever of you, Jaikes, to earn a shilling in that way.

JAIKES. It was artful, wasn't it? And now, missus, what shall we do with it?

NELLY. Well, Jaikes, it's your money.

JAIKES. No, missus, I only earned it for you and the dear little master and missy.

NELLY. Well, what do you think, Jaikes?

JAIKES. Faggots is cheap and relishing.

NELLY. I don't think they like faggots.

JAIKES. No? What do you say to some nice red herrings — soft-roe'd 'uns?

NELLY, Yes, red herrings are nice, but do you think there is enough support in them for growing children?

JAIKES. Well, perhaps there ain't, but there's plenty of flavour. (*Suddenly.*) I've got it, missus!

NELLY. Well, what, Jaikes?

JAIKES. Saveloys! After all, there's nothing like saveloys, is there? Talk about your partridge, your venison, and your 'are, why, I've tasted saveloys as 'ud give 'em all a start if it came to a question of game. But there, missus, you take the shilling and spend it how you think proper.

NELLY. You may be sure I shan't forget half an ounce of tobacco.

JAIKES. Tobacco — now don't you, missus, I've given up smoking.

NELLY. Given up smoking, Jaikes?

JAIKES. Yes; you see, missus, there's so many boys have took to it lately — I thought it was about time for men to leave off.

NELLY. Well, I shall insist on your having a good hearty meal with us.

JAIKES. Now don't you, missus. I ain't hungry. I've been smelling the dinners at Bodgers's all day, and what with his roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, his beefsteak and kidney pie, roast duck and stuffing, I sniffed and sniffed at them till I got a reg'lar attack of indigestion.

NELLY. Well, if you don't manage to find a great big appetite before I come back, there'll be such a to-do in this house as never was.

JAIKES. Don't I tell you, missus, I ain't hungry. Now you make haste and get something for Master Ned — by when he wakes.

NELLY (*going to inner door and looking off*). Look, Jaikes, how pretty he looks in his sleep.

JAIKES (*going to inner door*). Yes, bless his heart. How much he do remind me of — but I must n't say that, must I?

NELLY. Yes, say it, Jaikes — I like to think of him — my dear dead Will! Whatever his faults, he was always the best of husbands to me. (*Crying a little, then wiping away her tears.*) But there, I must n't cry to-day, now we've been so fortunate. Oh, Jaikes, I feel so much happier. I think we shall weather the storm after all.

JAIKES. Why, of course we shall, now I can go and earn shillings off-hand like that.

NELLY (*taking Jaikes's hands and swinging them backwards and forwards in her own*). And the cruel winter will soon be over.

JAIKES. And the nice warm spring days will come.

NELLY. And darling Ned will get well and strong again.

JAIKES. And I shall get lots of work and earn heaps of money.

NELLY. How happy we shall be!

JAIKES. Lor' bless you, missus, we shall get on like a house afire now.

NELLY. Dear old Jaikes! Wait here, Jaikes, I'll be back soon, and then we'll have our Lord Mayor's Banquet all together.

[*Opens door, crossing stage; exit.*

JAIKES. Blow up, Bodgers! (*Poking up fire.*) There! That's a blazing up beautiful. We shall soon have quite a Fifth of November. Master Ned's asleeping as sound as a top — Miss Cissy will be out of school soon and she'll take care of him. I wish I could earn another sixpence. We can't have much of a Lord Mayor's Banquet with a shilling, but with eighteen pence, what a treat we could have! (*Exit from cottage.*) I'll try! I'll try! There's life in the old dog yet.

[*Exit, running feebly and beating his arms.*

[*Children in school sing the following hymn. After first verse enter Denver. He has changed very much, his hair is almost white, and his face worn, his manner grave and subdued. He enters listening to the children's voices. The hymn is sung to the accompaniment of an harmonium.*

What though my sins as mountains rise
And reach and swell to Heaven,
Yet Mercy is above the skies;
I may be still forgiven.

Then let me stay in doubt no more
Since there is sure release;
For ever open stands the door,
Repentance, Pardon, Peace.

DENVER. Repentance, Pardon, Peace! The old, old message! The sweet old message! That must be for me — yes, even for me.

They are coming out. Perhaps I shall be able to get some news of my dear ones. I have tracked them so far, from one wretched home to another — Shall I ever find them, or find them only in the grave?

[*Children come out of school, skipping, shouting, laughing, etc. Cissy Denver comes out among the others; they are laughing, romping, and playing. She stands apart for a moment and then goes timidly up to them.*

CISSY. Let me play with you!

BIG GIRL. No, come away from her, girls! Nobody is to speak to her. (*To Cissy.*) Our fathers and mothers are respectable. Come on, girls!

[*Exeunt all the school-girls but one.*

[*Cissy is left sobbing, when the little school-girl who has stayed behind goes up to her and offers her a piece of cake.*

LITTLE GIRL. There, Cissy, don't you cry. I've got a piece of cake. There — (*giving cake*) don't you tell anybody — I love you if the others don't.

[*Kisses Cissy and runs off.*

DENVER. Why are you crying, my dear?

CISSY. The girls won't play with me. They won't speak to me.

DENVER. Why, how's that? What makes them so cruel? (*Cissy is silent.*)

Come, tell me all about it. You're not afraid of me, are you?

CISSY (*looking up into his face*). No, I like you.

DENVER. That's right. I thought we should get on together. Now tell me all your troubles — why won't they play with you?

CISSY (*looking cautiously round*). You won't tell anybody, will you?

DENVER. No, I promise you — it shall be a secret.

CISSY (*in a whisper*). They say my father killed a man. (*Denver starts up stung with pain and turns away his face.*)

Ah! that makes you turn away from me.

DENVER. No! No, my dear, don't think that. Tell me quick — what is your name?

CISSY. Cissy Denver.

DENVER (*aside*). My own child. The sins of the father are visited upon the children. Oh, Heaven, is it just? What has this innocent lamb done that she should be hounded for my crime!

CISSY. Why are you crying?

DENVER. Never mind me! Never mind me! Where do you live?

CISSY (*points*). In here.

DENVER. In there?

CISSY. Yes, will you come in?

[*Goes inside the cottage, leaves the door open. As soon as she sees the fire, she runs to it.*

DENVER. My own little Cissy that I left a toddling baby.

[*Enters cottage.*

CISSY (*kneeling by fire and clapping hands*). Oh, look! A fire! A fire! We have n't had a fire for I don't know how long.

[*Warms her hands.*

DENVER (*at back of table — aside*). In this wretched hole and without a fire! (*Comes to Cissy — aloud.*) Who else lives with you, Cissy?

CISSY. Mother and Ned, and our old Jaikes. You don't know our old Jaikes. I do love him!

DENVER. God bless him! Where are the others, Cissy?

CISSY. I daresay Jaikes has gone to get some work, and mother is in the next room nursing Ned. I 'll tell her you 're here.

DENVER. No, no, I must go — I have no business here.

CISSY (*who has been to inner door, opened it and looked in*). No — mother is n't at home. Oh, I know, we

can't pay our rent, and she's gone to ask the gentleman to let us stop on for a few days.

DENVER (*aside*). To stay on here!

CISSY (*runs to door*). Ned's in there; he's asleep. (*Denver is going to door to look; Cissy closes door and comes away.*) Hush! you must n't wake him. He's been very ill.

DENVER. Ill! Not very ill? Not dangerously ill?

CISSY (*goes to him*). Yes, but he's getting better. Won't you sit down and warm yourself. There's only one chair, but you may have that.

DENVER (*sits*). May I? And will you come and sit on my knee? (*Holds out his arms.*) Don't be afraid — come!

CISSY (*going to him*). Oh, I'm not a bit afraid of you.

DENVER. What has been the matter with your little brother?

CISSY (*sitting on Denver's knee*). The doctor says he has not had enough to eat. We have been so poor; sometimes we have scarcely had anything for days. Mother tried to get a living by teaching, but when people found out who my father was, they would n't let her teach any more.

DENVER (*aside*). The fiends! (*Aloud.*) But your mother has had some money — some friends have sent her some, eh?

CISSY. No, she has no friends.

DENVER. Yes, Cissy, yes — think again. She has had some money sent her?

CISSY. No; who would send her money?

DENVER (*aside*). It has never reached her. (*Aloud.*) And does the doctor think your little brother will get better?

CISSY. Yes; if he could have nice things to eat.

DENVER. So he shall! Everything that money can buy. (*Takes out purse.*) Here, take this, you'll find plenty of money in that.

CISSY. Is that for mother? Oh, that is kind,

DENVER. No, my dear, don't say that. Wait a minute. I've got some more money loose in my pocket. (*Taking it out and putting it in purse.*) There, now you've got all my money.

CISSY. And what will you do without it?

DENVER. Oh, I've got plenty more at home; and now — (*looking hungrily at her and longing to embrace her*) I wonder if you'll give me a kiss?

CISSY. Yes, that I will.

DENVER (*takes her in his arms and kisses her hungrily*). Don't take any notice of me, dear — don't mind my kissing you. I had a little girl of my own once, and when I kiss you it seems as if she came back to me again.

CISSY. She is dead then?

DENVER. Yes, dead — (*aside*) — to me. (*Aloud.*) Suppose, Cissy, that you — I mean that I — (*Aside.*) I can't say it!

CISSY. I know I should have been very fond of you if you had been my father.

DENVER (*clasps her in his arms eagerly and kisses her again and again*). God bless you, my darling; you must n't mind when your schoolfellows speak unkindly of your dead father.

CISSY. I won't — I don't believe it's true. I don't believe he was a bad man, because if he had been, Jaikes and mother would n't have been so fond of him.

DENVER. Always think that, my dear, always think that. How thin your clothes are, dear. (*He takes his muffler off and puts it round Cissy.*) There, dear, that will keep a little of the cold out.

CISSY. Oh, is n't it pretty?

DENVER. There, now run and find your mother and give her that purse.

CISSY. And who shall I tell her gave it to me?

DENVER. Say somebody gave it to you who happened to see you and thought you were like a little girl he had lost, and say, too, that — (*Breaking down, aside.*)

Oh, my wife, if I could but send you one word from my living grave!

CISSY. Yes, what else shall I say?

DENVER (*rising*). I dare not! No, dear, there is no other message. Your mother does not know me. (*Kisses her.*) Run along, dear, make haste and tell her of your good fortune.

CISSY. Yes, that I will! (*Coming out of cottage.*) She's gone to Mr. Skinner's — that nice big house across the field.

[*Exit Cissy.*

DENVER (*following her to door*). Run on then, my brave little queen. (*He watches her off and then looks carefully and cautiously round.*) My boy, I must see my boy! (*Re-enters cottage cautiously.*) Just one look, one kiss, nobody is about.

[*Denver goes into inner room, is absent a few moments then returns in tears. Jaikes enters, rubbing his hands to warm them.*

JAIKES. Artfulness ain't done it this time. Not a blessed ha'penny! Whew! it gets colder and colder. I wonder where the missy is?

DENVER (*coming out*). My little baby boy that I left, grown so thin, so pale, so wasted — is there no end to my sin, no end to its bitter fruit? (*Sees Jaikes — aside.*) Jaikes!

JAIKES. Hillo! What are you doing in there?

DENVER (*turns away his face from Jaikes and muffles it partly with his cape so that Jaikes does not see his features*). Excuse my intrusion. I was passing your cottage and happened to come in. I take a great interest in the sick poor. There's a little boy in that room — dangerously ill — send for the doctor to see him at once. Have the best advice you can get and give him some nourishing food, the best of everything.

[*Still keeping his face averted from Jaikes and speaking in slightly disguised tones.*

JAIKES. Oh, yes, that's all very well, but where's the money to come from?

DENVER (*aside*). Cissy has my purse. (*Aloud.*) I will pay for whatever is required. I have just given away all the money I have about me, but you can have the bills sent in to me — John Franklin, Kensington Gardens, London.

JAIKES. Oh, yes, it's likely I can get tick on the strength o' that, ain't it? A pound of tea and a quartern loaf and put it down to Mr. John Franklin, Kensington Gardens, London.

DENVER. Do as I tell you — you will find it all right.

JAIKES. Who is Mr. John Franklin? If you want to help us, why don't you give us some money and let's have a look at your face? (*Peers round Denver's muffler and recognises him.*) Master Will! (*Drops on his knees.*) Master Will! God forgive me! It's Master Will come back from the dead. Say it's really you, Master Will!

DENVER. Yes, it is I, come back, as you say, from the dead. My wife! Is she well? How is she? Has she suffered much? Does she ever speak of me?

JAIKES. Oh, Master Will, I can't tell you what she's had to go through. It's been a terrible hard fight for her, but she's borne up like a angel. Oh, sir, you've come back at the right time. We're nearly starving.

DENVER. Starving? That's all over now. I'm rich, Jaikes, I'm rich! When I left England I went to the Silver Mines of Nevada — I had to struggle hard at first and could only send you a few dollars — I was almost starving myself; but one morning I struck a rich vein of silver; to-day I'm richer than I can count; and then I sent you a thousand dollars, and so — none of it reached you?

JAIKES. No, sir, you see we've changed our home so often and she always took care not to leave our address for fear —

DENVER. For fear my wretched story should follow you, I see.

JAIKES. Ah, sir, don't say more about that — that's all past now. Oh, don't you mind my crying, sir; to see you come back like this is too much for me — I can't believe it, sir. (*Rises.*) And Miss Nelly — she'll go mad with joy.

DENVER. She must not know, Jaikes.

JAIKES. Not know? Not tell her, Master Will?

DENVER. Not yet! Not yet. Listen, Jaikes, I have come back to England with one thought, with one resolve — to make her happy. Whatever happens to me, that I will do. Shall I ask her to share my nightmare of a life, put her on a ceaseless rack of anxiety and suspense, torture her as I am tortured? Heaven forbid!

JAIKES. But surely, Master Will, you are safe after all these years?

DENVER. I shall never be safe till I stand in the dock to answer for my crime — I shall be safe then. I've started a hundred times to give myself up, but I have always been held back by the thought that I was not myself that night; but it will come, Jaikes.

JAIKES. What will come, sir?

DENVER. Detection. It may be to-morrow, or it may not be for years, but it will come, and if I were to join her, suspicion would be aroused at once. I might be discovered, dragged from her side, tried, condemned and hanged.

JAIKES. Master Will! But if missus could but know. If she could but know.

DENVER. Not yet, Jaikes. Listen, you shall take her from this poverty and put her in her old home with everything that money can buy, and then, when I have made her rich, cheerful, contented, I will ask myself whether I may dare to throw the shadow of my life across her happiness. In the meantime, promise me, swear to me that she shall not know.

JAIKES. Why, of course, Master Will, if you wishes it.

DENVER. Jaikes, I must see her — I am dying to look on her dear face, to hear one word from her lips — to see her without being seen.

JAIKES. That 's easily managed. Stand here; you 'll be able to see her and hear her and she 'll never be none the wiser.

DENVER. God bless you, my dear old Jaikes, for all your kindness. God bless you, I shall never be able to repay you.

JAIKES. There now, don't you talk nothing about that, Master Will. Why, to see you come back like this pays me fifty times over. I allus said you would. (*Crying with joy.*) I allus said — (*Looks off.*) Here comes Miss Nelly.

[*Denver and Jaikes go up and get behind cottage.*

[*Enter Nelly, crosses stage and goes into cottage.*

DENVER (*coming from behind*). My wife! My poor wife!

[*Nelly in cottage puts her purchases on table.*

NELLY. There, my precious ones, you shall have a meal to-night at any rate. I wonder where Jaikes and Cissy are?

DENVER. My own Nell, the girl who left her own bright home to follow my cursed fortunes. Oh, if I look another moment I must rush to her and hold her in my arms!

[*Enter Olive, quickly crosses stage and enters cottage. Denver retires behind cottage and comes out again after she has entered.*

OLIVE. I am the bearer of bad news. My husband has repented of his kindness. He will not let you stay here.

NELLY. Not let me stay here?

OLIVE. No — since you left him he has learned who you are. He has found out that you are the wife of a —

[*Denver turns aside as if stabbed with pain.*

NELLY (*checks Olive*). Ah no, no, for pity's sake don't

say it. I have heard the word so often. Yes, it is true —I am the widow of such a man, and for that I am to be punished, it seems.

[*Sobbing.*

OLIVE. Who knows it is true? Who knows that your husband did really kill that man?

DENVER (*eagerly*). What's that?

NELLY. Why, what doubt can there be?

OLIVE. It was never proved. He was never tried. Who knows but that there might have been some terrible mistake?

DENVER (*outside*). Some terrible mistake?

NELLY. What do you mean? What do you know?

OLIVE (*recovering herself quickly*). Nothing—I thought it might comfort you to think your husband was innocent. It could do no harm now that he is dead; but I am forgetting my errand. I came here to help you and I dare not stay.

[*Takes out purse.*

[*Coombe's voice heard off.*

COOMBE (*outside*). You can wait here. Be ready if I want you.

[*Coombe enters. As Denver hears and sees Coombe, he retires.*

COOMBE. But we'll try persuasion first.

[*Enters cottage.*

DENVER. The man who showed me into Geoffrey Ware's room that dreadful night. What does it mean?

OLIVE. There are three pounds five shillings. It is all I have.

[*Takes money out of the purse and shows it empty. Coombe, who has entered unseen by Nelly or Olive, gets to back of table and picks up money.*

COOMBE. It won't be necessary, ma'am. I'll take it to your husband. Your husband wants you—you'd better go.

[*Holds door of cottage open for Olive.*

OLIVE. Oh, if he were not my husband!

[*Exit quickly from cottage and crosses stage, going off.*

COOMBE (*calling after her*). Ah! you should n't have took your place for life.

[*Shuts door and turns to Nelly.*

DENVER. What now? If I stop this ruffian he 'll call his men and there may be a disturbance, and I may be involved. What can I do?

COOMBE. Now, my dear good lady, there 's a pleasant way of doing things and a unpleasant, and I always try the pleasant way first.

NELLY. Oh, don't make any words about it. You have come to turn me out, is it not so?

COOMBE. Oh, dear no. I 've only come to ask you in the kindest manner possible to pay your rent. Three pounds five shillings.

NELLY. How can I pay it? I have n't a shilling in the world, and you know I have n't.

DENVER. Where is Cissy? Where is the money?

COOMBE. Ah, that 's a pity! Because as you can't pay you must go.

NELLY. No, no! Let me stay to-night — only to-night. I will go to-morrow morning. My child is in that room very ill, and if he is moved in this bitter weather, it will kill him. Let me stay to-night, I will do no harm.

COOMBE. Now look here, my dear good lady — it 's no good your begging and praying to me, 'cos go you must.

NELLY. Oh, is there no tenderness, no pity on the earth!

COOMBE. Now, look sharp! Are you going to pack up?

NELLY. Yes, yes, give me a little time, I will go. (*Goes into inner room, re-entering almost immediately, very determinedly.*) No, I will not go. My child is sleeping. He is getting better, I will not wake him and take him into the bitter cold to kill him.

[*She bolts the door and stands with her back to it.*

COOMBE (*stands with his back to fire*). Will you go quietly, or shall I have to send for my men to turn you out?

NELLY. I tell you I will not go. Go back and tell your master that here I stay — I and my children — till he drags our bodies out and flings them into the streets.

COOMBE. Oh very well, we must try the unpleasant way then.

NELLY. Merciful Father, help me now!

DENVER. I can bear it no longer.

(*Comes to door, is about to open it, when Cissy runs to him.*)

Quick, my child, give your mother the money!

[*Pushes her through doorway. He has opened the door.*

CISSY. Mother, look what the kind gentleman gave me!

NELLY (*seizes money eagerly*). An angel from Heaven has sent it. (*To Coombe, as she throws money on the table.*) Here, take your money! Now you go!

[*Points to door.*

[*Coombe, baffled, picks up money.*

CURTAIN

(*Six months pass between Acts III and IV.*)

ACT IV

SCENE I. *Room in Denver's house, Kensington Gardens. Doors right and left. Window to left.*

Enter Frank Selwyn, showing in Baxter.

BAXTER. Mr. John Franklin not in, eh?

SELWYN. No. I am his private secretary.

BAXTER (*looking at him keenly*). Oh! you are his private secretary? (*Aside.*) This is the young sprig I 'm after.

SELWYN. Perhaps I might do.

BAXTER. No. I think not. When can I see Mr. Franklin?

SELWYN. It 's uncertain. What 's your business?

BAXTER. That 's my business! I 'll wait.

[*Turns back to audience and stands looking at pictures on wall, whistling.*

SELWYN (*aside, looking at Baxter*). Can he have come about that cursed cheque? It must come sooner or later. Mr. Franklin must find me out, find out that I have repaid his goodness by robbing him, returned his trust by forging his name!

BAXTER (*looking round*). I suppose you 've got a nice comfortable berth as Mr. Franklin's private secretary?

SELWYN. Yes.

BAXTER. Very rich man, is n't he?

SELWYN. Very.

BAXTER. Made his money in silver mining, did n't he?

SELWYN. Yes.

BAXTER. Ah! so I 've heard. Went to bed one night a common miner, and the next a millionaire.

SELWYN. I 've heard so. They call him the Silver King.

BAXTER. Gives a lot of money away, does n't he?

SELWYN. His whole life is spent in doing good. He 's as noble and generous as he is rich.

BAXTER. Ah! employs you to look after the deserving cases — trusts you with his purse, and his cheque book occasionally, eh?

SELWYN (*wildly*). What do you mean?

BAXTER. Nothing, only you must take care he does n't get imposed on. (*Aside.*) It 's all right — the young idiot!

SELWYN (*aside*). It must come!

[*Enter Denver.*

DENVER. Somebody wishes to see me, Frank?

BAXTER. Mr. John Franklin?

[*Looking at Denver.*

DENVER. Yes, I am John Franklin. What do you want?

BAXTER. I beg pardon; that is my card. (*Giving card.*) Sam Baxter, Scotland Yard. (*Aside, as Denver takes card.*) I 've seen you before somewhere, my gentleman.

DENVER (*wincing under Baxter's steady gaze*). Well, what is your business? I must beg you to make haste as I have to catch a train into the country.

BAXTER. Then I 'll come to the point at once.

(*Opens his pocket-book, takes out papers. Selwyn is going; Baxter stops him.*)

Mr. Private Secretary, you need n't go. We may want you. (*Aside, looking at papers.*) Now where have I seen you before, Mr. Franklin? (*Aloud, taking a cheque from pocket-book.*) Oh, here it is!

SELWYN (*aside*). The cheque I forged!

BAXTER. You bank at the County and Metropolitan?

DENVER. Yes.

BAXTER. This cheque was presented yesterday for payment in the ordinary way. The clerk refused to cash it, detained the presenter, and sent for you immediately. You were not at home, and so the affair was placed in my hands.

[*Denver comprehends the situation, and as Selwyn makes a movement as if to speak, stops him with a look of caution and silences him.*

DENVER (*to Baxter*). Give me the cheque.

[*Baxter gives cheque, Denver looks at it.*

BAXTER. That signature, sir?

DENVER. Well?

BAXTER. Is it in your handwriting, sir?

DENVER. Yes, it 's quite right.

(*Selwyn gives sigh and shows immense relief, and is about to blab out his gratitude. Denver stops him with a look.*)

Yes, the signature is a little awkward. I must have been in a hurry.

(*Baxter still looks incredulous.*)

Do you doubt me?

BAXTER. Oh, no, sir, if you say so, sir, of course it 's all right — if you wrote the cheque — why, there 's an end of the matter, is n't there, sir?

DENVER. I think so. You may take the cheque back to the bank, tell the cashier it is all right. If necessary I 'll call at the bank to-morrow and make the matter right. Will you accept a five-pound note for your trouble?

BAXTER. Thank you, sir, and if ever you should want my assistance in any little matter of business, sir, I shall be happy to oblige you, sir, and to keep my mouth shut.

[*In putting the note in his pocket, he intentionally drops a piece of paper.*

DENVER. Thank you, I have your card.

BAXTER (*aside to Denver*). Keep your eye on that youngster — he 's got mixed up with a bad lot. (*Aloud.*) Good-day, Mr. Franklin.

DENVER. Good-day, Mr. Baxter.

[*Turns to Selwyn.*

BAXTER (*glancing back at Denver, aside.*) I 've had you through my hands somewhere.

[*Exit Baxter.*

DENVER. Don't do it again, my boy, don't do it again!

SELWYN. I never will, sir! Oh, sir, your kindness breaks my heart! I've been such a bad fellow, sir! I don't deserve that you should forgive me. I shall be ashamed to meet you in the future, sir.

DENVER. I hope not. This was your first step downwards; pray that it may be your last.

SELWYN. It shall! It shall!

DENVER. Remember, I still trust you!

[*Exit Denver.*

SELWYN. I'll make a fresh start to-day. God bless him!

[*Exit Selwyn. Re-enter Baxter.*

BAXTER. I beg pardon, I must have dropped a paper here! Nobody here! (*Picks up the paper he had previously dropped, creeps to the window and looks out.*) There goes Mr. Franklin in a cab. Drives off! Now when and where have I had that man through my hands? Deuce take my memory! (*Comes slowly away from window.*) Dear! dear! (*Snaps his fingers and taps his forehead to aid his memory in crossing the stage; stops suddenly.*) Good heavens! Yes! that's the man! Derby night four years ago! The Skittle Alley at the Wheatsheaf — the revolver — whew! Here's a find! John Franklin, millionaire, philanthropist and Silver King, an unhung murderer. The hair grown grey but the same face. By Jove! What a catch for me!

[*Exit very swiftly and with great animation.*

SCENE II. *Exterior of The Grange.*

Discover Old Village People. Jaikes enters, very respectably dressed.

JAIKES. Well, Gaffer Pottle! Mrs. Gammage! Hillo, Tabby!

GAFFER (*an ancient decrepit villager*). My humble respects, Muster Jaikes. (*Turning to Tabby.*) Curt-

sey, Tabitha! Curtsey! Curtsey, you old fool! Don't you know Muster Jaikes is Master of the Grange and Lord of the Manor?

TABBY. Ah, Daniel Jaikes and me was brought up together. I ain't going to curtsey to Dan'l Jaikes. I 'm going to shake hands with him. Don't you remember how fond we was of one another when we was boy and girl together, eh, Dan'l dear?

JAIKES. No, I don't. It 's too many years ago — and don't call me Dan'l. (*Aside.*) Tabby's a setting her cap at me again; I must put a stop to that.

GAFFER. I hopes Miss Nelly is pretty tolerable?

JAIKES. Oh, she 's all right! Your dinner ain't ready yet. You can wait here a few minutes, and mind you all behaves yourselves! (*Very severely to Tabby.*) Tabby, let those flowers alone. I 'll tell Mrs. Denver you have arrove.

[*Exit Jaikes.*

GAFFER. Dan'l Jaikes seems to be rather 'igh and mighty now he 's come into his fortin'!

MRS. GAMMAGE. Ah! Fancy Dan'l Jaikes coming and buying the Grange and being Lord of the Manor, and bringing Miss Nelly back to live in it.

GAFFER. I can't make out who this here Uncle Samiwell was as has died and left Dan'l all this money.

MRS. GAMMAGE. Aye, Dan'l never had no Uncle Samiwell as ever I heered on.

TABBY. Ah, you folks don't know nothin' about it. Dan'l 's master of the Grange, ain't he? And I would n't say as I might n't be missus afore long.

GAFFER. I would n't say as you might n't, Tabby. Pigs might fly, but I 've kep' pigs for up'ards of fifty years, and I never seen 'm make a start.

MRS. GAMMAGE. No, Tabby, Muster Jaikes did n't seem to be noways particler smit with you just now.

GAFFER. Aye, aye, Tabby, you 've had three husbands and buried 'em all. You let well alone.

[*Enter from house Nelly, well dressed, with Cissy and Ned clinging to her, one on each side, Jaikes following them. Old People bow and curtsey.*

NELLY. Well, you have come, all of you; that's right. How do you do, all of you? (*Shaking hands with some of them.*) How do you do, Tabby?

TABBY. We're all well and hearty, thank you kindly, and we be mortal glad to see you back at the Grange again, bain't we, Gaffer?

GAFFER. Aye, we didn't like them folks as come here when you and Muster Denver left.

MRS. GAMMAGE. They were mean, they was.

TABBY. Aye, no beef and coals at Christmas, no pea soup, no blankets, no flannel petticoats, no nothing!

[*Cissy runs off into shrubbery.*

GAFFER. Aye, we knowed when you come back, Miss Nelly, there'd be plenty for everybody.

NELLY. I hope so. You see, my friends, I have known what it is to be poor myself. Since I left you I have heard my children cry for bread; indeed, if it were not for the kindness of my old friend here—

[*Indicating Jaikes, who shuffles about and looks very uncomfortable.*

JAIKES. Yes, yes, missus! We'll drop the subject.

NELLY. No, we will not. You know I owe everything to you. (*To the old people.*) Go and have your dinner, all of you. You'll find it ready in the hall. It is Jaikes that provides it for you, not I. First thank the Giver of all good, and then thank our dear old Jaikes.

JAIKES. No, no, I won't be thanked! (*Hurries them into house.*) Be off, you old vermints, be off!

(*Tabby stops behind.*)

Now, Tabby!

NELLY. What do you want?

TABBY (*curtseying to Nelly*). Oh! if you please, Miss Nelly, we liked that bit of beef you sent us so much. The next time we hopes it'll be a little larger and not

quite so fat. And I 'm getting short o' tea and candles, and a little drop of gin is comforting after washing all day. And my best gown 's wore out.

JAIKES. Good job too! I wish it was your tongue instead.

NELLY. Very well, Tabby, I won't forget you.

JAIKES. Now will you be off and get your dinner, or else you shan't have none! Be off! (*Hurries her off. Exit Tabby.*) The old hussy! You must n't let her impose on you, missus.

NELLY. Ah, Jaikes, it is for you to say — you are master here.

JAIKES. Yes, yes — of course, so I am — I forgot that! Still you know, missus, all this money is, as you may say, yours.

NELLY. Mine, Jaikes?

JAIKES. Yes, you see my Uncle Samuel left particular instructions in his will — well, never mind my Uncle Samuel, we 'll drop the subject. Ain't you 'appy now you 're back in your old home, missus?

NELLY. Yes, Jaikes, I am happy!

[*Sighs.*

JAIKES. Quite happy, missus?

NELLY (*sighs*). Yes, Jaikes, happier than I ever hoped to be.

JAIKES. There 's some'ut, missus! I can see — something you miss, now, ain't there? Tell the truth.

NELLY. Yes, Jaikes, there is.

JAIKES. What is it, missus? I 've ordered 'em to lay out the garden just as it used to be and to plant a new chestnut tree where the old 'un was blown down —

NELLY. It is n't that, Jaikes.

JAIKES. The old fish-pond as they folks filled up — I 'll have it dug out again?

NELLY. Ah, no, don't trouble about that.

JAIKES. Then what is it, missus? You shall have it if it costs a mint of money.

NELLY. Oh, Jaikes, can't you see what it is? I 'm back in my old home without the man who made it all dear to me — without my Will! Oh, I love him still — yes, I love him as much to-day as the day I married him in the church yonder. It was under this tree I promised to be his wife. Oh, Jaikes, I remember it as if it were yesterday. Everything here, every tree, every brick in the old house, every little nook and corner brings back to me his dear handsome face until I can sometimes hardly stop myself from running all through the grounds and fields and calling out, "Will! Will! come back to me, come back to me, if it were but for a moment!" Now you know what it is I miss in my old home, my husband 's love — and you can't give that back to me, Jaikes, no, no, not that, not that!

[*Exit.*

JAIKES (*looking after her*). Can't I? Oh, yes, I can, and I will, too, this very day! I 've wrote and told him I can't keep his secret no longer — he 's on his way to you now as fast as the train can bring him! You wait a bit, missus, and I 'll dry up them tears for you! You shall be the happiest woman in England afore this day 's over, that you shall! Make haste, Master Will, make haste and come!

(*Re-enter Tabby.*)

Hillo! what now, Tabby?

TABBY (*very affectionately*). Oh, Dan'l dear! I 'm so glad you 've come back again. Ain't you glad to be back among your old friends, Dan'l dear?

JAIKES (*cautiously edging away from her*). Yes — yes — middling!

TABBY. Don't you remember when we used to go cowslipping, eh, Dan'l?

JAIKES (*resolutely*). No, I never went cowslippin' along of you, Tabby.

TABBY. Oh, yes, you did, Dan'l. And our games at hide and seek?

JAIKES. No!

TABBY. Oh, yes, Dan'l, I used to hide and you used to try and find me.

JAIKES. Oh, no, Tabby! I used to hide and you used to try and find me!

TABBY. Oh, Dan'l, you don't know how fond I 've allays been of you, and now you 're gettin' old and I 'm gettin' old —

JAIKES. Yes, you are, Tabby, and precious ugly into the bargain!

TABBY. And I 've been thinking how nice it 'ud be if we could end our days together.

JAIKES. I 'm much obliged, Tabby, but I don't want to end my days just at present.

TABBY. Ah, but, Dan'l dear — me to take care of you and nurse you up, and you to take care of me and nurse me up — would n't that be nice?

JAIKES (*resolutely*). No, no, you might like it; but I ain't ambitious, Tabby, I 'm very content as I am.

TABBY. Ah, Dan'l — you 've never been married.

JAIKES. And you have — three times.

TABBY. And the best of wives I 've made, I 'm sure. Ask my three good men else.

JAIKES. It 'ud be a sin to disturb 'em now they 've got a bit of peace.

TABBY. And I should make a better wife now than ever.

JAIKES. You ought, Tabby, you 've had plenty of experience.

TABBY (*taking his arm affectionately*). Well, then, what do you say, lovey — when shall we be married?

JAIKES (*aghast*). Married! Me marry you! Why, you old Mormon, you old female Henry the Eighth! You old wolf in sheep's clothing! You — you, you old Bluebeard in petticoats! Me marry you! Never! Never! Be off with you! Be off!

(*Frightens her off. Exit Tabby.*)

I had a narrow squeak that time!

[*Enter Cissy with flowers.*

CISSY. Look, Jaikes, for mamma! Aren't they pretty? Oh, Jaikes, it was kind of you to bring us to this beautiful home!

JAIKES. Ah! it ain't me, little missy, it isn't me as is doing it at all!

[*Exit Cissy.*

[*Denver appears at gate.*

DENVER. Jaikes!

JAIKES. Master Will!

DENVER. Is anybody about? Can I come in?

JAIKES. Yes, come in, Master Will! Miss Nelly's gone to give her poor people their dinner and now I'm all alone.

DENVER. You're sure I shan't be seen?

JAIKES. No fear, sir, I'll keep a good look out.

DENVER. How is she? Is she quite well and happy — and the children?

JAIKES. Yes, they're all quite well. Oh, Master Will, I'm so glad you've come. I can't hold out much longer! Uncle Samuel has got me into a dreadful mess! I wish we hadn't invented him. And then there's all that money as you sent her anenonymously from America.

DENVER. Yes?

JAIKES. Well, it didn't turn up while we was starving, but now we're rolling in money and it's a nuisance, it all turns up as bold as brass. Oh, Master Will, don't hide it from her no longer — tell her as you're alive — you wait here — I'll go and fetch her to you.

DENVER. Stop, Jaikes, you mustn't go!

JAIKES. Master Will, when you brought her back here and spent all that money to make the old place just like it used to be when she was a girl, you thought you was going to make her happy, didn't you?

DENVER. And have I not made her happy? What more can I do?

JAIKES. Why, sir, don't you see — home ain't four walls and the ceiling and the furniture — home 's the place where them as loves us is — and it was you what made this place home for her, and she 's breaking her heart 'cause it 's her home no longer.

DENVER. Jaikes, I will tell you why my wife must not know that I am alive, and when I have told you, never speak of it again. Last night I went down to the river to a place owned by that man Coombe.

JAIKES. What, the man as was going to turn the missus out?

DENVER. Yes, I 've been following him up for the last six months, ever since I recognised him as the man that showed me into Geoffrey Ware's room that night. Just as drowning men catch at straws, I have caught at the straw of a hope that I might find out something. I don't know what — something that might give me a right to believe that I did not shed that man 's blood —

JAIKES. Ah, how happy it would make her!

DENVER. And so night after night I go to that place and watch, and watch, and watch. I 've tried to get in, all in vain; it 's a hopeless task. Well, when I got back last night, I found your letter waiting for me — begging me to make myself known to my wife. I read the letter again and again, and the more I tried to persuade myself that for her dear sake I must keep silence, the more my heart cried out, "I must have her! I will have her! If I die for it, she shall be my own again!" And then I thought I would take her out to Nevada, to the city that I have built, where every man would shed his blood for me, and every child is taught to reverence the name of John Franklin. "There," I thought, "I shall be free from the past, safe from the law there," I said, "we will live the rest of our days honored, happy, beloved, in peace with ourselves and all the world." And so I spent half the night planning out a happy future with her and my

children. Oh, Jaikes, I was so happy — I could n't sleep for joy of it; and when at last I put my head on my pillow, my one thought was, "To-morrow I will tell her I am alive! To-morrow I will take her in my arms and call her my wife again!"

JAIKES. And so you shall, Master Will! Let me fetch her to you! Let me fetch her to you!

DENVER. Stay! I fell asleep. Jaikes — do you know what a murderer's sleep is? It 's the waking time of conscience. It 's the whipping-post she ties him to while she lashes and stings his poor helpless guilty soul! Sleep! It 's a bed of spikes and harrows! It 's a precipice over which he falls sheer upon the jags and forks of memory. It 's a torchlight procession of devils, raking out every infernal sewer and cranny of his brain! It 's ten thousand mirrors dangling round him to picture and re-picture to him nothing but himself. Sleep — oh! God, there is no hell like a murderer 's sleep! That 's what my sleep has been these four years past. I fell asleep last night, and I dreamed that we were over in Nevada and we were seated on a throne, she and I; and it was in a great hall of Justice, and a man was brought before me charged with a crime; and just as I opened my mouth to pronounce sentence upon him, Geoffrey Ware came up out of his grave, with his eyes staring, staring, staring, as they stared at me on that night, and as they will stare at me till I die, and he said, "Come down! Come down! you whited sepulchre! How dare you sit in that place to judge men?" And he leapt up in his grave — close to the throne where I was — and seized me by the throat and dragged me down, and we struggled and fought like wild beasts — we seemed to be fighting for years — and at last I mastered him, and held him down and would n't let him stir. And then I saw a hand coming out of the sky, a long, bony hand with no flesh on it, and nails like

eagle's claws, and it came slowly — out of the sky, reaching for miles it seemed, slowly, slowly it reached down to the very place where I was, and it fastened on my heart, and it took me and set me in the justice hall in the prisoner's dock, and when I looked at my judge, it was Geoffrey Ware! And I cried out for mercy, but there was none! And the hand gripped me again as a hawk grips a wren, and set me on the gallows, and I felt the plank fall from my feet, and I dropped, dropped, dropped — and I awoke!

JAIKES. For mercy's sake, Master Will —

DENVER. Then I knew that the dream was sent for a message to tell me that, though I should fly to the uttermost ends of the earth — as high as the stars are above, or as deep as the deepest sea bed is below — there is no hiding-place for me, no rest, no hope, no shelter, no escape!

[*A pause. Cissy runs on.*

CISSY. Jaikes, who 's that?

(*Denver looks up and strives to hide his tears.*) Oh! it 's you! (*She runs to him and sits on his left knee.*) You 've come to see us in our new home! But you are crying — what 's the matter? Are you unhappy?

DENVER (*putting his arms round her*). Not now, Cissy — not now! Not now!

CISSY. Jaikes, do you know the kind gentleman?

JAIKES (*who has gone up stage and is keeping watch, looking off*). No, missy, no!

CISSY. I 'm so glad you 've come! You shall come and live with us, will you?

DENVER. What would you do with me?

CISSY. You shall play with Ned and me. We 've got a rocking horse and soldiers, and lots of things.

DENVER. What games we could have, could n't we?

CISSY (*clapping her hands*). Yes! Oh, do stay, will you! Do! Do!

DENVER. And your mother?

CISSY. Oh, I know she'd be glad to have you. She's always talking about you and wondering who you are. Who are you?

DENVER. Who am I?

CISSY. Yes, tell me — tell me true!

DENVER. Well, I'm a king.

CISSY. But what king are you?

DENVER. I'm the Silver King! At least that's what men call me.

JAIKES (*looking off*). The other way, Gaffer Pottle — this (*calling out severely*) is private!

[*Looks at Denver warningly.*

DENVER (*starting up*). I must go — good-bye, Cissy!

[*Kisses her.*

CISSY (*holding Denver's hand*). No, no, you must n't go! Mamma does want to see you so badly! Wait here! I'll go and fetch her. (*Runs off to house calling.*) Mamma!

JAIKES. Master Will, won't you stay?

DENVER. No, Jaikes — let me go! Not a word, for her sake! Let me go!

[*Exit Denver quietly.*

[*Enter Cissy.*

CISSY. Come on, mamma! (*Looks round.*) Where is he, Jaikes?

[*Enter Nelly.*

NELLY. Where is he?

JAIKES. Where's who, missus?

NELLY. The gentleman who was here who gave the purse to Cissy.

JAIKES. Oh, yes, missus, there was a gentleman here, but as — as he was rather pressed for time he had to go — to — to — catch his train.

NELLY (*going up towards gate*). Why did you let him go, Jaikes, when you knew how much I wanted to thank him? He can't have got far — I'll go after him.

[*She prepares to go after Denver; Jaikes goes before her.*

JAIKES. No, don't you go, missus! I'll run after him and bring him back. I shall catch him before he gets to the station.

[*Exit Jaikes after Denver.*

NELLY (*at gate, slowly comes down to seat*). Who can it be, this unknown friend, this silent, unseen protector, this guardian who is ever watching over my path? Cissy, what was the gentleman like?

CISSY. Oh, he was a very nice old gentleman!

NELLY. Old?

CISSY. Oh, yes, his hair was nearly white, and he was crying so much.

NELLY. Crying? Why should he cry? (*With sudden joy, aside.*) Can it be? Oh, if it were he, if it could be, if it might be, if it were possible! (*Eagerly snatches locket from neck, opens it, shows it to Cissy very eagerly.*) Cissy, was he like this?

CISSY. Why, that's my father's likeness, mamma!

NELLY. Yes, was he like that?

CISSY (*after looking at it for a moment or two*). Oh, no, mamma! The Silver King's hair is nearly white.

NELLY. But the face, Cissy, the face?

CISSY (*looking again*). No, my father's face is quite young and happy, and the Silver King's face is so sad and old. No, the Silver King isn't a bit like that.

[*Kneels by Nelly.*

NELLY (*shutting locket*). Of course not; I knew it was impossible! I was mad to dream of such a thing.

CISSY. Mamma, it wasn't true, was it, what the schoolgirls used to say?

NELLY. What, dear?

CISSY. That my father had killed a man.

NELLY (*aside*). I can't tell her the truth, I will not tell her a lie!

[*Enter Jaikes at gate.*

JAIKES (*panting, breathless*). I couldn't catch him, missus.

(*Cissy goes up to gate and looks off.*)

I followed him right up to the station and the train had just started!

[*Whistle heard.*

CISSY. Oh, Jaikes, that is a story! The train's only just started, for I heard the whistle and I can see the smoke.

[*Points off, right.*

[*Nelly goes up to gate, looks at Jaikes, who shuffles about and looks guilty and miserable.*

NELLY. Why are you playing me false? Why don't you tell me the truth?

JAIKES (*aside, very uncomfortable*). It'll come out — it'll come out!

NELLY. Who is this man? Your uncle who died? This gentleman who gave the purse to Cissy, this unknown friend who sent me all that money from America — who is he?

JAIKES. How should I know? I hates folks as sends anenonymous letters — I'd string 'em all to the nearest lamp-post without judge or jury!

NELLY. Jaikes, I will take no more money from you, no more food, no more shelter, till I know where it comes from. As bare and helpless as we came into this Grange, I and my children will leave it this very day and go out again to starve unless I know who it is that is loading me with all this wealth and kindness. Who is he, Jaikes? Who is he? Who is he, I say?

JAIKES. Oh, missus, can't you guess?

NELLY (*frantically.*) Ah, I know it! I knew it! He is alive! Take me to him! Make haste! I cannot wait a moment! (*Catching Cissy and Ned in her arms.*) Ned! Cissy! My darlings, kiss me, kiss me — your father is alive!

[*Kissing them eagerly, crying with joy.*

SCENE III. *Front scene. The exterior of Coombe's Wharf, with gate leading into the wharf yard.*

Enter Cripps from yard, looking round.

CRIPPS. Now I wonder whether Father Christmas intends to turn up or whether I 'm to be kept here all the night? (*Enter Coombe.*) Oh, here you are!

COOMBE. My dear boy, I hope I ain't kept you waiting very long, my dear boy.

CRIPPS. Yes, you 'ave, and the next time just you give me the straight tip and I 'll go and get drunk instead of wasting my time.

COOMBE. Where 's the Spider?

CRIPPS. He 's just gone, and he wanted to know why the blazes you don't get somebody to look after this crib and let us in instead of keeping us hangin' about the place as if we was suspicious characters.

COOMBE. I wish I could get hold of a likely party.

CRIPPS. I thought you had got your heye upon a man —

COOMBE. So I had — little Johnny Piper, the very man for the job.

CRIPPS. Well, why did n't you have him?

COOMBE. He got the clinch only last week — eighteen months. You see it 's no good having anybody here as ain't got a unblemished character. We don't want to have the bluebottles come sniffing round here, do we?

CRIPPS. Not likely!

COOMBE. I suppose the Spider 's comin' back?

CRIPPS. Yes, he did n't seem much to relish the prospect of spending his time with me in your back-yard here, so he 's gone off to his club — he said he 'd be back here at ten.

COOMBE. Ah! the Spider always keeps Greenwich time.

CRIPPS. Yes, other folks' Greenwich time, when he can nobble 'em. Ah! the Spider 's a deep 'un! He was never bred up on pidgin's milk, Spider was n't.

COOMBE. Spider 's too grasping. We shall have to take him down a peg or two.

CRIPPS. It 's that viller residence of his what swallows up all our hard-won earnings. Why, you and me might take viller residences if we liked, could n't we?

COOMBE. Yes, of course.

CRIPPS. And we could keep our cooks and buttons, and 'arf a dozen 'osses, and mix with the gentry if we felt so disposed, could n't we?

COOMBE. Yes, to be sure we could — but we don't.

CRIPPS. No — 'cos why? 'Cos the less we mix with the gentry the better — except in the way of business.

COOMBE. Yes, Master Spider 's a-flying too high for us. You back me up to-night and we 'll clip his wings a bit.

CRIPPS. All right. I 'll back you up. Come on inside. [*Going in.*

[*Denver enters, dressed as a ragged, shabby old porter.*

DENVER (*grinning, to Coombe*). Here 's poor deaf Dicky.

COOMBE. No! nothing for you to-night, Dicky!

DENVER. Yes, guv 'nor, find a job for Dicky. Poor deaf Dicky! Find a job for poor deaf Dicky, guv'nor!

CRIPPS. Who the blazes is this cove?

COOMBE. Oh, he 's been knocking about here on and off for the last six months. He 's handy to run errands and take letters to the sea captains that want to buy my old iron, d' ye see? (*Winking and nudging Cripps.*) He 's as deaf as a post, and he ain't quite right in his upper storey.

DENVER. Don't be hard on poor deaf Dicky, guv'nor — give Dicky a job! Dicky run very fast and get back in no time. Find a job for poor deaf Dicky.

COOMBE (*shaking his head vigorously*). No! no! no!

DENVER. Mr. Coombe shakes his head and says No! no! no! but Dicky says Yes! yes! yes! Poor Dicky, so hungry! Dicky has n't had a job all day.

COOMBE (*entering wharf*). No, no, I've got no jobs to-night.

DENVER (*imploringly, stopping him*). Dicky only wants

a master to treat him kind and dry bread to eat and rags to wear — Dicky's so cold.

CRIPPS. Well, be off and get what you want at the workhouse, you forty-horse-power idiot!

COOMBE. Oh, he's useful to me sometimes. (*Takes out money.*) There's a sixpence. Go and get some supper; and don't make a beast of yourself.

DENVER. Thank you, guv'nor, thank you! Dicky do anything for you, guv'nor! Dicky very fond of you! Dicky likes —

COOMBE (*pointing him off*). Be off with you!

DENVER (*running off*). Dicky's got a sixpence! Dicky's got a sixpence!

CRIPPS (*looking after him*). He's as daft as forty blessed hatters. Come in, Father Christmas!

[*Coombe and Cripps go in at gate. The gate closes with a clang.*

DENVER. Shut out! Shut out! Shall I never worm myself in? I must be mad to dream that ever I shall wring this man's secret from him; and yet he was in Geoffrey Ware's room that night! Let me think of that! Let me beat it into my brain. This man led me up those stairs — why? why? Oh, if I could but remember after that! No! no! All's dark! All's uncertain. To think that within a dozen yards of me there is a man whose word might give me wife, children, home, all! All! And I stand here and can do nothing!

[*Enter Corkett loudly dressed.*

CORKETT (*aside*). Now I wonder which is old Coombe's shanty? I know it's somewhere about here!

DENVER (*sauntering by him in apparent carelessness, recognises him*). Geoffrey Ware's old clerk! What has he to do with this man? Can this be another link in the chain?

CORKETT (*aside*). I can see their little dodge. They mean to cut 'Enery Corkett. Spider's never at home when I call, and when I met him in Regent Street the

other day, he would n't so much as give me a friendly nod; stared at me as if I was so much dirt. I ain't going to be treated like so much dirt, and I ain't going to be cut, or else I shall cut up rough. I 'll just let master Spider see as 'Enery Corkett 's as good as he is. Now I wonder where Father Christmas hangs out? (*Sees Denver.*) Hillo! I say, my good fellow!

DENVER (*holding his hand to his ear*). Eh?

CORKETT (*aside*). He 's deaf! (*Shouts.*) Can you tell me where I can find a party by the name of Coombe — a marine-store dealer? Coombe!

DENVER. Deaf Dicky got no home — got no friends.

CORKETT (*aside*). He 's a blooming idiot! (*Shouts.*) Well, find me a party by the name of Coombe. He lives in the Gray's Inn Road, and he 's got a wharf somewhere down here — Coombe!

DENVER (*nodding*). Coombe! Dicky knows Mr. Coombe! White hair, red nose, spectacles, nice kind gentleman, good old gentleman!

CORKETT. That 's him! A perfect beauty, old Coombe is. Where is he?

DENVER. Dicky must n't tell. Dicky take message — give Dicky letter and sixpence and Dicky take it to Mr. Coombe — let Dicky take letter to Mr. Coombe.

CORKETT. Oh, I see — caution 's the word! Father Christmas don't want to be smelt out. I 'll go into a pub and write a letter to Coombe and give it to this daffy to take, and then I 'll follow him up and see where he goes. (*Shouts.*) Well, come on, old dunderhead, I 'll give you a letter to take to him.

DENVER. Thank you, thank you! Dicky take it to Mr. Coombe!

[*Exit Corkett.*

DENVER. At last! At last! At last!

[*Exit after Corkett.*

SCENE IV. *Interior and Exterior of Coombe's Wharf. Discover Coombe and Cripps.*

CRIPPS. I say, let 's have some wet.

[*Lights pipe.*

COOMBE. Put a name on it.

CRIPPS. Oh, beer, gin, rum, whisky, brandy, anything as has got some taste in it.

COOMBE. I 'll give you a wee drop of prime Highland whisky, my dear boy.

[*Exit at inner door.*

CRIPPS (*shouting after him*). Bring the jar while you are about it.

(*Skinner enters outside, and whistles.*)

The Spider!

[*Rises and goes to door, unlocks it, admits Skinner, then closes door and relocks it.*

SKINNER. Well! (*Taking off gloves.*) Where is the venerable Coombe?

CRIPPS. The venerable Coombe is getting this child some whisky.

SKINNER (*dropping his voice*). Between ourselves, I half suspect Mr. Coombe means to execute a double shuffle on his own account with those diamonds of Lady Blanche.

CRIPPS. He 'd better not try it on.

SKINNER. Just so! You back me up and we 'll get at the truth to-night.

CRIPPS. All right! I 'll back you up.

[*Coombe re-enters with whisky jar and water jug and glass, which he sets down in front of Cripps, who helps himself largely.*

COOMBE (*cordially, holding out his hand to Skinner*). My dear boy, I 'm delighted to see you.

SKINNER. Reciprocated, Mr. Coombe — there 's something magical in the grasp of your hand. It 's horny and damned dirty — what of that? It 's honest! The shake of an honest hand does me good.

[*Takes out his handkerchief and wipes his hands behind his back.*

[*Enter Denver outside, with letter. Knocks at door. Skinner puts out light.*

CRIPPS. Who the blazes is that?

COOMBE (*goes to door, calls out*). Who 's there? Who 's there?

DENVER (*knocks*). Poor deaf Dicky got letter for Mr. Coombe. Let Dicky in, please.

COOMBE. All right, Spider, it 's only a deaf idiot that brings messages for me!

[*Opens door. Skinner lights candle.*

DENVER (*at door*). Letter, guv'nor. Gentleman wanted to know where Mr. Coombe lived. Dicky would n't tell him. Dicky wanted to bring letter and earn sixpence — gentleman give Dicky twopence, gentleman had n't got any more.

[*He has been trying to enter, but Coombe stops him at the door.*

COOMBE. All right! Give me the letter. Wait!

(*Denver is coming inside. Coombe shoves him out.*) No, outside!

[*Shuts door in Denver's face.*

DENVER (*outside*). How long? How long?

COOMBE (*opens letter*). From the Duke of New York.

SKINNER. Curse the fellow! To think how many good people die off every day, and yet that blackguard persists in living on.

COOMBE (*reads letter*). "Dear Father Christmas: I 'm cleaned out and I want a little of the rhino. You ain't treating me fair. I must see you to-night, so send me back a message by the idiot who brings this."

SKINNER (*snatching letter*). Tell him to go to the devil! Now, Coombe, sharp 's the word! Let 's get to business.

COOMBE. I 'll send off Deaf Dicky first.

CRIPPS (*suddenly struck with an idea*). Boil me down into mock-turtle soup!

SKINNER. What's the matter, Cripps?

CRIPPS. Why, the deaf chap would be just the man to keep this here crib.

SKINNER. We ought to have somebody here. What's the fellow like?

COOMBE. He's deaf and an idiot. The police'd never be able to get anything out of him, and he could never tell any lies against us.

SKINNER. That's the sort of man we want. Bring him in! Let's have a look at him.

[*Coombe opens the door and beckons Denver in. He comes in grinning and touching his cap to Skinner and Cripps.*

SKINNER. What's your name?

(*Denver touches his cap and grins.*)

What's your name?

DENVER (*nodding and grinning*). Yes, guv'nor!

CRIPPS. What's your confounded name, you thick-headed hoddy-dod?

DENVER. He's round at the public house. Dicky go and fetch him, guv'nor?

SKINNER. This man would be a perfect treasure in the witness-box.

DENVER. Dicky go there if you like, guv'nor.

SKINNER. I should like to see him under cross-examination.

DENVER. Dicky take him an answer?

SKINNER (*shaking his head*). No answer. Listen! You want work — don't you — WORK!

[*Shouting.*

DENVER. Work? Oh, yes, guv'nor! Dicky work very hard; scrub the floor, run messages. Dicky do what you tell him.

SKINNER. Coombe, this man is like you. He'll do anything for an honest living.

COOMBE. Shall we have him?

DENVER. Dicky be as faithful as a dog. Dicky follow you about everywhere and never leave you — never leave you.

SKINNER. The devil you won't. That would be rather awkward!

DENVER. Give poor Dicky a chance, guv'nor.

SKINNER. He 's as safe as anybody we can get. All right, Coombe, give him a trial!

DENVER. What did you say, guv'nor?

SKINNER (*indicating Coombe*). No, he'll tell you. I can't shout any more.

COOMBE. You can come here as porter and sleep on the premises. (*Takes a shilling and counts on his fingers.*) Look! Fifteen shillings a week — fifteen shillings!

DENVER. Oh, thank you! thank you! Dicky so glad! so glad! so glad!

COOMBE (*beckoning Denver*). Come this way; I'll show you where you've got to sleep. Sleep!

DENVER. Dicky stay here always — Dicky very fond of Mr. Coombe — Dicky stay here always! Thank you, Mr. Coombe — thank you, too, sir! Thank you, too!

[*Exit at inner door, after Coombe.*

SKINNER (*to Cripps, taking out moulds*). Cripps, I want you to make me some keys to fit these moulds.

[*Explains to Cripps in dumb show. Enter Corkett outside.*

CORKETT. That idiot 's a long time gone. This was the place he went in at. (*Looks through the keyhole.*) There 's a light inside.

[*Knocks.*

SKINNER (*puts out light*). Who the plague is that?

[*Corkett knocks again, and whistles in peculiar manner.*

CRIPPS. It 's that blessed Duke of New York.

SKINNER (*relighting*). You'd better let him in or else he'll kick up a row.

[*Cripps goes to door, unlocks it, admits Corkett, who is very loudly dressed; outrageous tweed suit, eyeglass, crutch stick, white hat, light kid gloves. Cripps locks door, leaving key.*

CORKETT. How do, dear boys! Ah, Spider, old chummy! (*Waving his hand to Skinner.*) Bless you, bless you!

SKINNER. Bless yourself! Pray for some brains. What do you want here?

CORKETT. £. s. d., especially the £.

SKINNER. What have you done with that last twenty pounds?

CORKETT. Blued it!

SKINNER (*looking at Corkett's clothes*). You've been to my tailor's again, I see.

CORKETT. Yes. Neat, ain't they? Told him to put 'em down to your account. Hope you don't mind it, dear boy!

SKINNER (*venomously*). Take care, you brute! You're nearly at the end of your tether!

[*Enter Coombe.*

COOMBE (*seeing Corkett, shakes hands with him*). Why, it's our young friend, 'Enery Corkett.

CORKETT. Dear old Father Christmas!

SKINNER. Now, Coombe, have you stowed away your March hare?

COOMBE. Yes, I've took him up to the cock-loft and give him some bread and cheese and left him. He seems happy enough.

SKINNER. Then business sharp. Where's the money-box?

[*Coombe takes cash-box out of chimney, opens it and takes out money.*

CRIPPS. How much?

COOMBE. A hundred and eighty.

SKINNER. Only a hundred and eighty for all that plate? I'd better have left it on Sir George's sideboard—I shall miss it the next time I dine with him.

COOMBE (*giving money to Cripps and Skinner*). That clears Sir George's plate.

SKINNER (*pocketing money*). Right! (*To Coombe.*) Now, my venerable chum, just one word with you about Lady Blanche's jewels — where are they?

COOMBE (*uneasily*). Well, you see, my dear boy, I did n't like to leave them here and — and so I took 'em to my own place — my shop in the Gray's Inn Road. I thought they 'd be safe there.

SKINNER. Now, Coombe, you 're telling lies, you know. Lies! and setting a bad example to Cripps here!

CRIPPS. Yes. Father Christmas, don't you try any hanky-panky tricks with this child. You know me. Handle me gentle, use me well, fair and square. I 've got the temper of a sucking lamb, have n't I, Spider?

SKINNER. You have, Mr. Cripps, and also its playfulness and innocence.

CRIPPS. But rub me the wrong way — come any dodge, try to do me out of my fair share of the swag, and then — !

[*Brings fist down on table with tremendous force.*

SKINNER. Then you have the ferocity of the British lion in mortal combat with the apocryphal unicorn. Now, Coombe, once more, where are Lady Blanche's diamonds?

COOMBE. My dear boy, I 've got a gentleman coming to see 'em next week — a gentleman from Amsterdam.

CRIPPS. Damn Amsterdam!

SKINNER. Never mind that; I want my property!

CORKETT (*aside*). There 's a reward of a thousand pounds offered for them jewels. I 'll have a cut in here!

[*Denver creeps on and hides behind bales and listens with great interest.*

SKINNER. Those jewels are worth six thousand pounds, and once more, for the last time, where are they?

COOMBE. Don't get into a temper, Spider! I tell you

I may have a customer for 'em next week — we'll settle for 'em then!

SKINNER. No, we won't settle for them then, we 'll settle for them now!

CRIPPS. Yes, we'll settle for 'em now!

CORKETT (*joining in*). Yes, we'll settle for 'em now!

SKINNER (*turning sharply on Corkett*). You infernal jackanapes, what business is it of yours?

CORKETT. Every business of mine, Mr. Spider; look there! (*Turns out his pockets, shows they are empty.*) That's what business it is of mine! I mean to have fifty quid out of this!

SKINNER. Oh, you do, do you?

CORKETT (*promptly*). If you don't give it me I 'll let on about Hatton Gardens four year ago.

[*Denver starts violently and shows great interest.*

SKINNER (*with deadly rage*). If you say half a word more —

CORKETT (*promptly*). Half a word more!

[*Skinner seizes him by the throat; Coombe seizes Skinner.*

COOMBE (*alarmed*). Come, come, my dear boys, this won't do!

CRIPPS (*holding Corkett*). Stow it, Spider, stow it!

SKINNER. I've given you rope enough, Mr. Corkett!

CORKETT (*still held by Cripps*). Don't you talk about rope, Spider! If it comes to hanging, it won't be me, it 'll be you!

[*Denver shows great interest. Skinner tries to get at Corkett. Coombe interposes.*

SKINNER. Curse you, will you never give me peace till I kill you?

CORKETT. Yes, as you killed Geoffrey Ware!

[*Denver, no longer able to restrain himself, leaps up with a terrific scream of joy.*

DENVER. Ah! innocent! Innocent! Thank God!

ALL (*turn and see Denver*). Who is it? Who is it?

DENVER. Wilfred Denver! (*To Cripps and Corkett, who are in front of door.*) Stand from that door!

[*They do not move. Denver flourishes crowbar—Cripps and Corkett retreat down stage.*

ALL (*overcome, helpless*). Stop him! Stop him!

DENVER. Stop me! The whole world shall not stop me now!

[*Gets through door and bangs it to.*

PICTURE

CURTAIN

ACT V

SCENE I. *Skinner's villa as in the first scene of Act II. Night. Moonlight.*

Enter Skinner, with a lighted candle and bag, by door.

SKINNER. Olive! (*Pause.*) Olive! Olive!

OLIVE (*outside*). Yes!

SKINNER. Come down at once, I want you. (*Takes jewel-case and cash-box out of bag.*) Now, have I got everything? Yes, I think so, everything worth taking. Coombe's private cash-box. (*Taking a jemmy from his pocket, prises cash-box open, takes out jewels.*) As I thought — Lady Blanche's jewels! The old fox! The old sweep! I knew he meant to rob me. (*Takes out a bag of money from cash-box.*) Hillo, Mr. Coombe's private savings! That's lucky. They'll come in handy at a pinch.

[*Puts bag in his pocket.*

[*Enter Olive. She is in a dressing gown and with her hair down as if newly aroused from sleep.*

OLIVE. What do you want?

SKINNER. Shut the door.

OLIVE. Herbert! Something has happened. What is it?

SKINNER. The worst. That man Denver is alive.

OLIVE. Alive! No — Impossible!

SKINNER. Yes, and has got on our scent. Knows everything.

OLIVE. Have I not always said a day of retribution would come?

SKINNER. For Heaven's sake don't preach now. Listen to me, and if you make one mistake in carrying out my instructions, it's death and ruin to me. Now will you obey?

OLIVE. Oh, Herbert!

SKINNER. No sermons. Will you do as I tell you?

OLIVE. You know I will — if it 's to save you.

SKINNER. You see all this?

[*Opens cabinet — puts all the jewels, etc., into it.*

OLIVE. Yes.

SKINNER. While this is safe, I 'm safe. If it 's found, I 'm ruined — you understand?

OLIVE. Yes.

SKINNER (*locking cabinet and giving the key to Olive*). There 's the key. The moment I leave this house, take all that, sew it securely in your dress, walk to Lewisham, take the first train to Charing Cross and the morning express to Paris. Go to the old address; I 'll join you as soon as I can. Remember what 's at stake. If you find yourself watched or followed, get rid of it — burn it, plant it on somebody else; for Heaven 's sake, don't be found with it on you. Don't write to me. Now, is that all? Yes, that 's all.

OLIVE. I shall not see you again?

SKINNER. Not for a week or two. Good-bye!

[*Kisses her.*

OLIVE. Good-bye, Herbert. Take care!

SKINNER. It 's you who must take care. I can trust you, Olive?

OLIVE. Yes, I will make no mistake. It shall not be found.

SKINNER. Good girl! I shall make something of you yet. (*Whistle heard, off.*)

Coombe! (*To Olive.*) Now be off. The moment the house is clear set to work.

[*Exit Skinner.*

OLIVE. Oh, Herbert, what am I doing for your sake?

[*Exit Olive.*

[*Enter Skinner, followed by Coombe, Cripps and Corkett.*

COOMBE. My dear boy! What luck! Did you follow him up?

SKINNER. Yes, to a big place in Kensington Gardens; he's John Franklin, the millionaire. The Silver King!

COOMBE. Well, what did you do, my dear boy?

SKINNER. Cheeked it out; went into the place and asked for him — gave my name and was shown up.

CORKETT. And what did he say, Spider?

SKINNER. He's just driven off into the country — Heaven knows why; but I got his address and I can put my hand on him when I choose.

CRIPPS. Yes, but can you stop his jaw?

SKINNER. Yes, I can stop his if I can stop yours! Now look here, you three — we are perfectly safe while we hold our tongues. There's not a fraction of evidence against us, and there never will be if we keep quiet. But the moment one of us opens his mouth, it's transportation for all of us. Now, do we stick together?

CRIPPS. Yes, of course we will, Spider.

SKINNER. Right! Now there's not a moment to waste. Coombe, you go to your place in the Gray Inn's Road. You may get a visit from the police to-morrow — be ready for them; destroy every scrap that could tell a tale. Sharp's the word — off you go!

COOMBE. But the swag at the wharf?

SKINNER. The swag is not at the wharf. It's safe. Now will you go? (*Hustles Coombe off.*) Now you, Cripps, you go to the Lawn, Kensington, and watch the house.

CRIPPS. Whose house?

SKINNER. Denver's — Franklin's, or whatever he calls himself — take the Moucher with you and send him to the Carr Lane Crib to report every three hours.

CRIPPS. But the blessed swag — what about that?

SKINNER. Don't I tell you the swag is safe?

CRIPPS. Yes, but where is it? What do you call safe?

SKINNER. I call a thing safe, Cripps, when that thing is in my possession and its whereabouts is known only to myself. Now the swag is safe in that sense.

CRIPPS. That's all my eye!

SKINNER. You shall have your share when the time comes.

CORKETT (*aside*). Yes, and I'll have mine.

SKINNER. No words. (*To Cripps.*) Bundle off.

[*Shoves Cripps off.*

CORKETT. And what am I to do, Spider?

SKINNER. You! It was your cursed blabbing that brought us into this infernal mess. Now I'll give you just one word of caution. If you ever open your mouth one single half-inch, it's all up with you. If that Hatton Garden business comes to light — if it's ever known that Denver did n't do it, it will be known that Corkett did. We've made up our minds that if one of us has to swing for it, it'll be you. Now you're warned.

CORKETT. Oh yes, Spider, I'll take my davy I'll never mention it again.

SKINNER (*taking money bag from pocket*). Now if I let you have a sufficient sum, do you think you can manage to make yourself scarce for three months?

CORKETT. I'll try, Spider. I should like to go on the Continent if I'd got coin enough. I've got a pal in Amsterdam.

SKINNER. Very well, I'll let you have fifty pounds.

CORKETT. Fifty pounds! Oh, come, Spider, don't be stingy! Three months, and they're sure to cheat me. I can't speak a word of Dutch. Make it a hundred and I'll be off slick to-morrow morning.

SKINNER. I shall give you sixty and not a penny more. (*Begins to count out money — aside.*) Coombe's money comes in handy.

CORKETT (*watching him, aside*). That's one of old Coombe's bags. How did Spider get that? He must have brought the swag here.

SKINNER (*giving him money*). There you are, and don't reckon on getting any more from me. I've had just as much of you as I can swallow. There's a train from

Liverpool Street to Harwich at eight o'clock. You'd better go by it.

CORKETT. All right, Spider, I'm off. Ta, ta.

[*Exit Corkett.*

SKINNER. I think I've shut his mouth for the time; but the moment he's spent the money he'll come back. Curse them, I won't trust any of them. Now let me see! Olive is safe! The swag is safe! Nothing can touch me. The Grange, Gardenhurst, Bucks. Now then for Mr. John Franklin.

[*Puts out light and exit.*

[*A pause. Enter Baxter cautiously, by window.*

BAXTER. The light out. Which way did they go? He brought that stuff here. It must be in the house somewhere. Oh, if I could only nab you, Spider. To think that I know that that rascal has had his finger in every jewel robbery for the last ten years, and I've never been able to lay my hands on him. But I think I shall be one too many for you this time. There's some big swag about here to-night, and I won't leave this house till I've smelt it out.

(*Hears footsteps and retreats to window. Enter Olive.*)

(*Aside.*) The Spider's wife!

OLIVE. They have left the house — now is the time. (*Goes to cabinet and unlocks it.*) Oh, how my heart beats. Courage — for Herbert's sake. Hark, who's that? Somebody at that window. Who can it be? (*Leaves cabinet open, stands back, touches Baxter — screams.*) Who's there?

BAXTER. Silence for your life.

(*Struggles with Olive, who would scream out, but that Baxter puts his hand over her mouth and hustles her off.*)

Who's this coming? Is it Spider? Steady, Sam, steady!

[*Hides behind curtain. Re-enter Corkett.*

CORKETT. Spider's safe off. He's all right — the swag must be here. He could n't have carted it nowhere else. Now where's he put it? All's quiet — if I can only collar it I will make myself scarce. I'll go to the continent and enjoy myself. (*Knocks against cabinet.*) What's that? Why it's the blessed cabinet. Crimes! It's open! (*Feels inside.*) These are the cases! Here's a lucky squeeze. (*Takes out jewel cases, etc.*) Golly, here's all the blessed lot of it. Why it'll be a perfect little gold mine to me. (*Kneels down to look at jewels and stuffs them into his pockets quickly.*) I can be honest now for the rest of my life. After all, honesty is the best policy. (*Stuffs one case under his waistcoat.*) Won't old Spider be jolly mad when he finds it out. I'm off — my name's Walker!

[*During the latter part of Corkett's speech, Larkin, a detective, has sneaked round from window. As Corkett rises and is going off he confronts him.* TABLEAU. *Corkett then turns to escape, right, and is met by Baxter, who pounces on him.*

BAXTER. No, it is n't. It's Corkett! I know you, you young blackguard. (*To Larkin.*) Turn on the light.

CORKETT. Nobbled — Baxter — fourteen years!

BAXTER. Now, my young friend, turn out. Let's see what's in your pockets.

CORKETT. I've only got my handkerchief.

BAXTER. Let's have a look at it.

CORKETT. And a bunch of keys!

BAXTER. Turn out — produce!

(*Corkett begins gingerly to fumble about and produces nothing.*)

Now, will you hand over?

CORKETT. Yes, sir.

[*Produces a jewel case.*

BAXTER (*opens it*). The Honourable Mrs. Farebrother's rings. Stolen from her maid while travelling.

CORKETT. I don't know neither her nor her maid.

BAXTER. Fire away! The next!
(*Corkett produces another. Baxter looks at it.*)
Hunt and Gask. Bracelets! Bond Street robbery last Autumn.

CORKETT. I can prove an alibi. I was in quod at the time.

BAXTER. The next? Look alive! Here, I've got no time to waste. (*Taps Corkett's waistcoat where case is.*) What's this? (*Takes out case and looks at it.*) By Jove, Lady Blanche Wynter's jewels!

CORKETT. Yes, I was just a-going to take 'em to her.

BAXTER. I'll save you the trouble.

CORKETT. There's a reward of a thousand pounds offered for them jewels.

BAXTER. I'll save you the trouble of taking that too.

CORKETT. I say, you know, I'll just tell you how this happened — how it ain't my fault, it's my misfortune —

BAXTER. Oh yes, you're a very much injured young man. Now, my sweet innocent, you just come along nicely with me.

CORKETT. Yes, so I will. I'll come like a lamb. But I say, you know, this ain't my swag — not a blessed bit of it. It's all Spider's.

BAXTER. We'll talk about Spider by and by. Trot!
[*Exeunt all through window.*)

SCENE II. *The Grange, Gardenhurst. As in Act IV, Scene II. Early morning.*

Nelly discovered at gate, looking anxiously off.

NELLY. Make haste, Jaikes, make haste and bring him to me. What if Jaikes could not find him — or if Will would not come? Oh yes, he will — the train is whirling him to me. He is coming — he is coming!
[*Denver and Jaikes enter. Denver sends Jaikes off.*

DENVER (*to Jaikes, as they enter*). Go round to the front and bring her to me.

(*Exit Jaikes.*) (*At gate, sees Nelly. Aloud.*) Ah, there she is.

[*Nelly, turning, sees him, but does not recognize him for a minute. He holds out his arms and she drops gradually into them.*

NELLY. Is it — my Will? My Will — this face — this white hair — my Will alive?

DENVER (*clasping her*). Nell!

[*Kisses her hungrily — a long embrace.*

NELLY (*hysterically*). Oh, Will — don't speak. Don't say a word. Only let me look at you. Oh, let me cry or else my heart will break. Don't stop me, Will. Ha, he, ha!

[*Sobbing and laughing in Denver's arms.*

[*Enter Jaikes.*

JAIKES (*aside*). I can't find her nowhere — she ain't at home. (*Sees Nelly in Denver's arms.*) Ah, yes, she 's at home at last.

[*Creeping quietly off on tip-toe.*

DENVER (*to Jaikes*). Where are you going?

JAIKES. I 'm going to have a look at the weather, Master Will!

[*Exit Jaikes.*

DENVER (*sitting on seat, Nelly at his feet; soothing her*). That 's right, have a good cry and ease your heart. Oh, Nell! Nell! I 've such news for you — the best news ever spoken. There is no other news — think of it — I never killed that man, I am innocent!

NELLY. Oh, Will, can it be so? Oh, Will, it seems to me as if I were dreaming. I can only look in this dear changed face and ask, "Is it true"?

DENVER. Yes, my own. Do you think I am changed?

NELLY. Yes, and no — changed and not changed — you are always the same to me — you are always my Will! You are not changed a bit.

DENVER. Nell, our children — our little Ned and Cissy — where are they?

NELLY. I was waiting for you to ask that; I've been watching them all night. Come, we'll go and wake them.

[*Enter Jaikes, with the two Children, one on each side, dragging him by each hand.*

JAIKES. Gently — gently, missy — gently, Master Ned! That's my old rheumaticky arm. Don't you pull it out of joint, you young Turk.

DENVER (*meeting Children and taking them to seat, puts them on his knees*). Ned, Cissy, do you know me? I'm your father that was dead — I am alive again and I have come home to you, my brave boy, my dear little girl; put your arms round my neck, both of you. Quite, quite close — that's it, my darlings!

CISSY. I know who that little girl was that you lost!

DENVER. Well, tell me — who was she?

CISSY. Why, me, was n't she?

DENVER. Yes, I've found her now — I shall never lose her again.

CISSY. No, we shall never let you go away again, shall we, mamma?

NED. But you are crying?

CISSY. And Jaikes, you too? What is there to cry for?

JAIKES. Don't you take no notice of me, missy. (*Blubbering.*) I'm not crying — I'm only laughing the wrong way.

NELLY. Cissy, when you were a little baby and could just run about, you used to call somebody upstairs and down — all over the house — don't you remember? Who was it?

CISSY (*hugging Denver*). Daddy!

JAIKES. Yes, missy, and I can remember when your daddy used to go toddling a-calling " Jaikes " all over the house. Ah, Master Will, I can just remember your great-great-grandfather. I've seen five generations of

you and I've never had a happier moment than this in all my life.

[*Enter Skinner looking anxiously round. His face is livid and his whole appearance betokens his intense anxiety.*

NELLY (*sees Skinner*). Look, Will, that man!

DENVER (*starts up, sees Skinner — to Jaikes*). Jaikes, take my children away!

(*Exit Jaikes with Children. To Nelly.*) Go into the house, Nell. I will come to you when I have sent this man away.

NELLY. No, let me stay — I would rather stay!

SKINNER (*advancing*). Mr. John Franklin!

DENVER. Denver, sir. (*To Nelly.*) Come, Nell, I have no business with this man!

SKINNER. Mrs. Franklin, I hold your husband's life in my hands. If you value it, beg him to hear what I have to say.

NELLY. Oh, Will, is it true? Are you in danger? Yes, let us hear what he has to say.

SKINNER. What I have to say must be said to him alone.

NELLY. Oh, Will, listen to him — for my sake!

DENVER. Remain within sight, within call. (*To Skinner.*) Now, sir!

SKINNER. Look here, Mr. Franklin!

DENVER. Denver, sir!

SKINNER. I thought I had better not mention that name — I do not want to get you into trouble.

DENVER. I'll take care you don't do that!

SKINNER (*aside*). He seems calm — he means mischief. (*Aloud.*) You appear to misunderstand me.

DENVER. Not at all! I understand you perfectly. I've watched you night and day for the last five months.

SKINNER (*whose self-confidence is shaken by Denver's coolness*). What do you know! What have you seen?

DENVER. Enough for my purpose.

SKINNER. And you mean to use it?

DENVER. I do.

SKINNER. Take care! I warn you, don't quarrel with me. I'll give you a chance — if you're wise, you'll take it before it's too late.

DENVER. Go on.

SKINNER. We are both in a devil of a mess. Why not make a mutual concession, silence for silence — you keep quiet on my affairs, I will keep quiet on yours — you allow me to pursue my business, I allow you to pursue yours.

DENVER. And the alternative?

SKINNER. You fight me — I fight you. You proclaim me a thief and get me a possible five or seven years; I proclaim you as a murderer and get you hanged. Take care; it's an edged tool we are playing with. It cuts both ways, but the handle is in my hands, and the blade towards you. You had better remain John Franklin. Wilfred Denver is dead — let him remain so.

DENVER. You lie! Down to your very soul, you lie! Wilfred Denver is alive, and to-day all the world shall know it. (*Calls.*) Nell! (*Nelly comes to him.*) There stands the murderer of Geoffrey Ware! He wants to bargain with me; shall I hide myself or shall I tell the truth to the world? Shall I make peace with him or shall I fight him? Give him his answer, Nell!

NELLY. You shall fight him!

DENVER. You have your answer — go!

SKINNER. I shall go straight from here and give information to the police that Wilfred Denver is alive.

DENVER. Nell, send Jaikes to me. (*Exit Nelly.*) (*Takes pocket-book and writes hurriedly, speaking as he writes.*) "From Wilfred Denver, The Grange, Gardenhurst, Bucks. To Superintendent, Criminal Investigation Department, Scotland Yard. I surrender myself to take my trial on the charge of the murder

of Geoffrey Ware, of which I am innocent, and I know the whereabouts of the real murderer."

(*Enter Jaikes and Nelly from house.*)

Jaikes, take this telegram at once.

[*Baxter appears at gate; speaks as he enters garden.*

BAXTER. I'll take that.

[*Holds out his hand, takes the telegram from Jaikes, who is going towards gate.*

DENVER. Baxter!

SKINNER (*aside*). Baxter! Now for my chance! (*Aloud.*) Mr. Baxter, do your duty and arrest the murderer of Geoffrey Ware!

[*Pointing to Denver.*

BAXTER (*taking out handcuffs*). Very well, I will do my duty and arrest the murderer of Geoffrey Ware!

[*Clasps the handcuffs on Skinner, who is much surprised and drops his stick. Two detectives walk on.*

SKINNER (*struggling*). What do you mean?

BAXTER. I mean that your dear friend Mr. Henry Corkett has turned Queen's evidence.

SKINNER. And you believe him?

BAXTER. Oh, yes, I always believe what's told me—especially when it's proved.

SKINNER. And what proof have you of this tale?

BAXTER. The evidence of your other friends, Mr. Coombe and Mr. Cripps. Thanks to Mr. Corkett, I've bagged the lot of 'em and they all tell the same tale. Is that enough, Spider?

SKINNER. The blackguards! Hang the lot.

BAXTER. Well, no. I think that may happen to you, but I fancy they'll get off.

JAIKES. Oh, don't let 'em off, master. Hang the lot of 'em.

BAXTER. Mr. Wilfred Denver, I believe?

DENVER. That is my name.

BAXTER. I shall want you as a witness against this man.

DENVER. I shall be ready to come when called upon; but I've no desire for revenge — my only wish is to clear my name.

BAXTER. That is already done. (*Picks up Skinner's stick.*) Come, Spider, I want to catch the up train — I've got a call to make on Lady Blanche Wynter in town this morning.

SKINNER (*glancing at handcuffs*). Is this necessary?

BAXTER (*giving him his walking-stick*). Well, yes, I think so, if you don't mind. (*To Detectives.*) Take care of him, Bob. (*Turns to Denver.*) You've had a very narrow escape, sir. Good-morning, sir.

[*Exit Skinner and the Detectives, followed by Baxter. They go off, gate.*

DENVER (*as they go*). Good-morning, Mr. Baxter!

(*Jaikes goes off during the above, and returns with the two Children.*)

Come, let us kneel and give thanks on our own hearth in the dear old home where I wooed you and won you in the happy, happy days of long ago. Come, Jaikes — Cissy, Ned, Nell — come in — Home at last!

CURTAIN

THE MIDDLEMAN

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

TO E. S. WILLARD

My dear Willard:

In publishing "The Middleman" eighteen years after its production, I am sadly conscious that much of it is old-fashioned in manner and form. And if the matter and substance of the play are still interesting to playgoers, it is because the story repeats some rude enforcement of that old perennial message to the oppressor, "Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

I hope, however, that some excuse may be found for me in printing a play that has so long been popular on both sides of the Atlantic. Perhaps I may claim that its publication will at least serve to show how much, and in what directions, the English drama has moved in these twenty years. But I think I can find a better justification for the appearance of the play in this form. Amongst the many thousands, perhaps millions, who have seen "The Middleman," there must be many who would like to revive in their own homes the memory of your performance of the old potter. By reading the play, they will be able to see how deeply I am indebted to you for your impersonation of Cyrus Blenkarn.

On seeing "The Middleman" a year or so ago, I was delighted to find that your performance retained all its old fire and passion, all its old charm and variety. So far as I could remember and compare, it did not sensibly differ from the performance on the first night, so fortunate and memorable for both of us, August 27, 1889. It had mellowed, but it had not decayed; it had, perhaps, gained in sweetness, but it had not lost in strength.

In asking you to accept the dedication of "The Middleman," I am glad to renew in public the personal thanks I have often rendered to you; and to own how much of the success of the play has been due to your singularly powerful and impassioned realization of Cyrus Blenkarn.

I am,

Always faithfully and gratefully yours,

HENRY ARTHUR JONES.

March 29, 1907.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I. Drawing-room at Tatlow Hall. One day passes.

Act II. Work-room in Blenkarn's House. Six months pass.

Act III. The Firing-house. Two years and a half pass.

Act IV. Drawing-room at Tatlow Hall.

The whole of the action takes place in the Town of Tatlow at the present day.

"The Middleman" was originally produced at the Shaftesbury Theatre, London, on August 27, 1889.

Original Cast

Cyrus Blenkarn	Mr. Willard
Joseph Chandler (of the Tatlow Porcelain Works)	Mr. Mackintosh
Captain Julian Chandler (his son)	Mr. Henry V. Esmond
Batty Todd (Chandler's managing man)	Mr. H. Cane
Jesse Pegg	Mr. E. W. Garden
Sir Seton Umfraville	Mr. Ivan Watson
Daneper (Reporter)	Mr. W. E. Blatchley
Vachell	Mr. Royston Keith
Epiphany Danks (of Gawcott-in-the-Moors)	Mr. Cecil Crofton
Postman	Mr. T. Sydney
Dutton	Mr. Rimbault
Servant	Mr. Hugh Harting
Mary, Nancy (Blenkarn's Daughters)	Miss Maud Millett, Miss Annie Hughes
Mrs. Chandler	Mrs. E. H. Brooke
Maude Chandler	Miss Agnes Verity
Lady Umfraville	Miss Josephine St. Ange
Felicia Umfraville	Miss Eva Moore

THE MIDDLEMAN

ACT I

SCENE. *Drawing-room at Tatlow Hall. Discover Chandler at open window left, addressing crowd without. Daneper taking notes of speech. Sir Seton Umfraville yawning left. Lady Umfraville and Mrs. Chandler on settee. Maude and Felicia. Batty Todd applauding and shouting "Bravo" in a very enthusiastic manner. As curtain rises, great cheers are heard without. When the cheers subside, Chandler, a smug, fat, prosperous-looking man of fifty, with the manners of an upper-class commercial man, continues his speech.*

CHANDLER (*continuing speech with considerable hesitation*). Yes — gentlemen — as your worthy mayor has called me — a King of Commerce — ah — ra — I 'm proud of the title. (*Shouts outside:* "Hear! Hear!" *Cheers continued. Todd always cheering and clapping his hands.*) I 'm proud of representing that great commercial spirit of the age which — ah — ra — has made England what she is to-day. (*Cheers outside:* "Hear! Hear! Bravo!") Which — ah — ra — has covered her through the length and breadth of the land with — ah — ra — railways and factories and mines — and chimneys and steam-engines — and — so — on — I — ah — ra —

[*He gets stuck and stops.*

TODD (*after a short embarrassing pause*). Hear! Hear!

CHANDLER (*floundering*) I repeat — ah — ra — which —

[*Looks helplessly round at Todd.*

TODD (*prompting in an undertone*). Energy — lofty business spirit.

CHANDLER (*primed*). That energy — that lofty business spirit, that faculty of organization which provides labour for thousands and which — ah — ra — (*slight cheers outside and a single "Bravo"*) whatever may be the result of next year's election, you — ah — ra — you will find plenty of light refreshments in the marquee.

[*Tremendous cheering outside. Todd again very demonstrative. Chandler, looking very much relieved, comes away from window to Lady Umfraville, and wipes his forehead.*

TODD (*comes down, prompting him*). Fireworks!

CHANDLER. Yes, I forgot. (*Goes back to window, is received with cheers, commands silence by a gesture.*) There will be a grand display of fireworks on the lawn this evening.

[*Great cheers.*

CHANDLER (*very anxiously to Todd*). Well, Todd?

TODD. Wonderful! Eh, Sir Seton? Wonderful!

CHANDLER (*anxiously*). Candidly, Todd?

TODD. On my honour! You know I never flatter. (*Aside to Chandler.*) I've fished up old Danks! I'll bring the old blackguard in while he's tolerably sober.

[*Exit through window.*

[*Captain Julian Chandler enters conservatory, sits down moodily in chair next to table. Dutton follows him with brandy, soda, and cigarettes.*

MRS. CHANDLER. Maude, darling, where is Miss Blenkarn?

[*Julian listens attentively*

MAUDE. In her room, mamma.

MRS. CHANDLER. Could n't she be helping the servants in the tent?

JULIAN (*listening, mutters to himself*). No, mother, I'm hanged if she shall. (*To Dutton.*) More brandy! (*Takes spirit decanter, pours for himself.*) You can go!

[*Sits and smokes moodily.*

[*Dutton goes off.*

[*Reënter Todd at window; speaks off.*

TODD. Come in, Mr. Danks! Now, Daneper, my boy! Here's a pretty little picturesque incident going to happen! Dodge it up for your paper. Come in, Mr. Danks!

[*Enter at window Mr. Epiphany Danks, a very aged rustic, slightly tipsy and rather deaf, Todd conducting him to Chandler.*

TODD. Mr. Chandler, this is Mr. Epiphany Danks of Gawcott-in-the-Moors, the oldest man in the county. He will shortly exercise, for the first time in his life, that franchise which the wisdom of our legislature has conferred upon him. (*To Daneper.*) Have you got that down?

(*Daneper nods, goes on writing.*)

Such is the fervour of his political convictions and his admiration of your glorious public spirit that for the mere pleasure of shaking you by the hand he has performed the astounding feat of walking every step of the fifteen miles from his residence at Gawcott-in-the-Moors.

[*Todd nods direction to Daneper, who replies by nod.*

DANKS (*shaking hands with Chandler with one hand, affectionately pawing him with the other*). Druv over in Sam Rawlins's van — me and old Bet Turney — stopped at every blessed public as us come along — la! What a morning we have had, to be sure!

[*Beams benignantly on Chandler.*

CHANDLER (*embarrassed with Danks's affection*). Very proud, Mr. Danks, to grasp your honest hand! Very proud!

TODD (*dictating to Daneper*). Mr. Chandler's warm and tender nature was moved to tears by this touching proof of political devotion on the part of the patriarch of Gawcott!

DANKS (*still retaining Chandler's hand*). Yaller, bain't you?

CHANDLER. Yes, yellow is our colour, Mr. Danks.

DANKS. I be yaller! (*Shouts feebly.*) Yaller for ever! Damn they there blues, I say! No more and no less! Damn 'em!

TODD (*dictating to Daneper*). Mr. Danks, in a few terse, well-considered phrases, expressed the sternest condemnation of his political opponents.

CHANDLER (*to Todd*). Get him away, Todd.

TODD. After your exertions you must be in need of refreshments, Mr. Danks!

DANKS (*suddenly drops Chandler's hand*). Grub? Where?

TODD. This way.

DANKS (*again insists on shaking hands with Chandler*). Well, good-bye! (*Wrings Chandler's hand.*) Don't you be afraid of them 'nation gallows blues! (*Reassuringly to Chandler.*) *I* shall vote for 'ee. I be the oldest man in this here county! Born Epiphany Sunday, annie domino!

[*As Danks passes Sir Seton, he stops and wants to shake hands with him; holds out hand. Sir Seton does not respond.*

DANKS (*cannot understand it*). Yaller, bain't you?

SIR SETON. Yellow, Mr. Danks, but inexpansive.

[*Chandler watches Sir Seton; shows annoyance that Sir Seton will not indulge Danks. Danks still holds out hand. Sir Seton shakes his head, but points to Todd, who immediately holds out hands to Danks.*

DANKS (*effusively to Todd*). I like you! There ain't no nasty pride about you! You be yaller! So be I. (*Glares viciously at Sir Seton. Shouts feebly.*) Yaller for ever! Hurray! Well done our side!

[*Todd gets him off at window and returns, dictating to Daneper who is writing throughout.*

TODD. The rustic Nestor, after a truly remarkable display of political sagacity, then took his departure.

FELICIA. What a charming circle of friends a parliamentary candidate gathers round him, Mr. Chandler!

CHANDLER. My dear Miss Umfraville, for the good of my country, there is no sacrifice too great for me!

[*Enter Mary into conservatory, gets behind Julian's chair, speaks to him in a low tone.*

MARY. You must go?

JULIAN (*without looking up, same tone; speaks in front of him*). Yes, by the night mail.

MARY (*showing great disappointment, steadies herself, speaks in a low, earnest tone*). I *must* see you before you leave. (*Julian looks up.*) Hush!

[*Passes on into drawing-room.*

MRS. CHANDLER. Miss Blenkarn, I'm surprised you haven't employed yourself in the marquee!

(*Julian rises angrily and comes to drawing-room door.*) The servants have so much to do on a day like this —

JULIAN. How does what the servants have to do concern Miss Blenkarn?

[*Maude and the Umfravilles all show embarrassment.*

MRS. CHANDLER. I think it very inconsiderate, Julian, of a young person in Miss Blenkarn's position —

JULIAN (*interrupting*). Miss Blenkarn's position in this house is companion to my sister; and considering the obligations we are under to her father —

CHANDLER (*very much upset, interrupts*). Obligations! What obligations?

JULIAN. Why you know, father, it was his invention that made your fortune.

CHANDLER (*terribly upset*). What! What on earth will get into your head next? (*Julian is about to speak.*) Hold your tongue, sir!

JULIAN. Sir!

MARY. Captain Chandler, please say no more! I will go and help.

JULIAN. No. Not unless the others go too, Maude!

MAUDE (*very pleasantly, rises*). Very well, Julian, I'm ready to do anything! Pour out anybody's tea, kiss anybody's baby, anything to advance the political edu-

cation of the nation! Let's all go! It will be rather jolly! Come along! Now, Mary!

[*Takes Mary's arm. Mary throws a grateful look at Julian and exit with Maude.*

MRS. CHANDLER. Really, Julian, if you had n't been leaving us to-day for ever so long, I should be very angry with you!

[*Exeunt Mrs. Chandler and Lady Umfraville.*

[*Chandler is meantime conferring with Daneper and Todd. Sir Seton is occupied with paper.*

FELICIA. Won't you come with us, Julian?

[*Going up and looking back.*

JULIAN (*indifferently*). Yes — if you like.

FELICIA. You're not a very amiable lover, considering I'm going to lose you for months, perhaps years, and that you may get lost or killed in Africa!

[*Exeunt Julian, Felicia and Daneper.*

CHANDLER. Sir Seton (*Sir Seton puts down paper*), it would be of immense advantage to my candidature if you were to — to — a — to — a — mix a little with my guests.

SIR SETON. Should be delighted, Chandler, but leap-frog and skittles are rather out of my way.

CHANDLER. A little cordiality, a little friendly intercourse — with such persons as Danks for instance — goes a great way.

SIR SETON. It does with me.

CHANDLER. And now Julian and Miss Umfraville are engaged — and you promised —

SIR SETON (*a little angry, controls himself*). My dear Chandler, let us understand one another. You're rich — I'm poor! I've had to turn out of Tatlow Hall! You've turned into it! I've only one child, and I want to spare her the continual struggle with genteel poverty that her mother and I have gone through. And naturally I want the old place to be hers. You agree to settle so much upon her the day your son marries her,

and I shall use my influence amongst my county friends to get you into Parliament. There our agreement ends, and as for playing skittles with Mr. Danks, — excuse my plain speaking, — I 'll see your election damned first!

CHANDLER (*cordially*). Oh, quite so! Quite so!

[*Exit Sir Seton.*

CHANDLER (*aside*). If I could only get into Parliament without him!

TODD. Oh, by the way, sir, have you looked through the proofs of the interview for Saturday's *County Herald?*

CHANDLER (*pulls proof from pocket*). Yes, here they are. Not up to your usual form, Todd.

TODD. What 's wrong?

CHANDLER. I think you might make a great deal more of my philanthropy. You 've said nothing about my building the new congregational chapel at Little Hoggesdon.

TODD. Yes, but now you 've joined the Church —

CHANDLER. I take a very broad view of these matters. You might mention that!

TODD (*taking notes*). Very well. Profoundly sincere religious convictions, but no narrow bigotry.

CHANDLER. That 's it. By the way, about that subscription to the Wesleyan Sunday Schools — I should think a ten-pound note, eh?

TODD. You gave twenty to the Baptists. All the fat will be in the fire if you don't treat 'em both alike.

CHANDLER. Very well, twenty then. I wish there were n't quite so many sects. It gives one a very poor opinion of religion.

TODD. When you 've got to subscribe to them all, it does. But you can't get into Parliament without it.

CHANDLER (*running over proofs*). "Great business energy." That 's all right! "Paternal care of work people, not a man, woman or child in the Tatlow Porcelain works who would n't gladly lay down his life for

Joseph Chandler." That's very good indeed, Todd — "Most affectionate husband and father — sacred shrine of domestic happiness — "

TODD. That always goes down with the British public.

CHANDLER. Just so. (*Reads.*) "Under his fostering care, the Tatlow Porcelain works have grown from a mere hovel to cover two acres of ground and to afford employment for five hundred hands. The discovery some twenty years ago of a peculiar process of glazing by an ingenious workman named Cyrus Blenkarn — " (*Stops, annoyed.*) What's the object in mentioning Blenkarn's name?

TODD. Well, as the fact of his invention is so well known —

CHANDLER. Well known! Of course, it's well known, so what's the good of mentioning it? Where would his invention have been if it had n't been for my capital and business energy in working it? Besides, I paid him for it, two hundred pounds. And look how good I've been to him ever since — always advanced him money on his wages to fool away on his crack-brained inventions that never came to anything. No! It's not necessary to mention Blenkarn. He shares in the glory of belonging to the works. That ought to be enough for him.

[*Julian enters.*

TODD. Very well, I'll alter that paragraph. (*To Daneper, who enters.*) All right, Daneper! — I'll bring round the proofs to-night. By the way, Daneper, I could give you a few notes about Captain Chandler. They might be of use to your editor. (*To Chandler.*) Eh, sir?

CHANDLER. Certainly.

[*Daneper comes to Todd, takes note-book and pencil. Julian listens with growing anger.*

TODD (*dictating*). Our local hero, Captain Chandler, having covered himself with glory in the last Egyptian campaign, is again about to visit Africa. He has nobly

volunteered to accompany the relief expedition in search of the renowned African traveller, Sir George Hinchinbrook. The deadly perils of the Central African desert —

JULIAN. Stop that confounded flummery, Todd. I'll give you the particulars myself. (*Dictating.*) Captain Julian Chandler, having got himself into a devil of a mess at College and in the Service and being dunned by all the Jews in Christendom, has been obliged to accept his father's offer to pay off his debts on condition of his settling down and becoming respectable —

CHANDLER (*interrupting*). Julian! This is scandalous!

JULIAN (*taking no notice of Chandler*). But not wishing to tie himself up at present, he was jolly glad to get the chance to cut away to Africa.

CHANDLER (*fuming*). Julian!

JULIAN. The Tatlow brass band accompanied Captain Chandler tc the railway station, and played a selection of the liveliest airs, to testify their delight at the prospect of there being one blackguard the less in the county. Put that down, Daneper, and let them know the truth about me!

[*Exit Julian.*

CHANDLER (*upset, fuming*). Really, this is monstrous! I never heard —

TODD. Never mind, sir. I'll put that all right. (*To Daneper.*) That's all right, Daneper. Tell Mr. Snoad I'll call at the office by-and-bye and bring him all particulars myself.

DANEPER. Very well, sir; good-day. Good-day, Mr. Chandler.

[*Takes notes from table, puts them in pocket and exit.*

TODD (*soothing Chandler*). Don't trouble, sir. I'll see the *Herald* has it corrected.

CHANDLER. Thank you, Todd. You think my speech made a good impression?

TODD. Excellent! Magnificent! Wonderful!

CHANDLER (*seizes Todd's hand; wrings it effusively*). I never met a man with a stronger natural judgement than yours, Todd! You never mind telling me the truth candidly and fearlessly!

TODD. Why not? What object is there in telling lies? By the way, sir, when you get into Parliament, you will allow me to help you in your Parliamentary duties?

CHANDLER. Naturally, Todd, naturally. Statistics always bother me, Todd. Now you're very good at statistics.

TODD. Don't you trouble about statistics. You let me know what you want to prove, and I'll guarantee the statistics shall be all right.

CHANDLER. Thank you, Todd.

TODD. And I suppose I shall continue the management of the Tatlow works as well.

CHANDLER. Of course, Todd. Of course.

TODD. And perhaps at some future time you will admit me to a partnership.

CHANDLER (*aghast*). Partnership, Todd? (*Very much upset.*) Really, you surprise me — just as I had taken you into my confidence in everything. It's too bad, Todd. It's encroaching on my good nature! You have the honour of belonging to the works. You share in the glory that attaches to the name of Joseph Chandler. I think that ought to be sufficient.

TODD (*humbly*). Very well, sir. I'll say no more.

CHANDLER. No, don't, there's a good fellow. Go and see that everybody's attended to. I shall be out amongst them soon.

[*Exit Chandler.*

TODD. Ah, that's gratitude, that is! Where would Joseph Chandler have been if Batty Todd had n't worked him?

[*Exit Todd.*

[*Re-enter Chandler, Maude, and Felicia.*

CHANDLER (*brisk, oily, polite, to Felicia*). Well, how are all our friends enjoying themselves?

MAUDE. All the old people have gravitated to tea, and all the young to kiss-in-the-ring!

CHANDLER. Well, so long as they are satisfied.

FELICIA. Don't you think kiss-in-the-ring is somewhat *too* satisfying? I speak from observation, not from experience.

CHANDLER. Oh, quite so! Quite so!

[*Enter Lady Umfraville and Mrs. Chandler.*

LADY UMFRAVILLE. Well, I'm disappointed! It seems this wonderful man is not here!

CHANDLER. What wonderful man?

LADY UMFRAVILLE. This workman of yours who made that lovely dinner service you gave us!

CHANDLER (*contemptuously*). Oh, Blenkarn!

LADY UMFRAVILLE. Yes, I must see him! I'm sure he's quite a genius, and I'm so fond of genius! I adore genius!

CHANDLER (*nettled*). Genius! I don't call a mere inventor a genius, Lady Umfraville!

LADY UMFRAVILLE. No? What's your idea of a genius then, Mr. Chandler?

CHANDLER. My idea of a genius is — a — ah — a — practical man, a man who does n't invent anything himself, but has the insight, and courage, and shrewdness to see the value of another man's invention, and the energy to secure it and work it; a man who, by sheer force of business enterprise, raises himself to the position of a great public benefactor and provides labour for thousands of his fellow creatures. (*Getting eloquent.*) That's the type of genius that I admire, and that's the type of genius that suits our modern civilization!

LADY UMFRAVILLE. And the only type of genius that seems to flourish in it!

FELICIA. What's your idea of a genius, Maude?

MAUDE. I never saw one! I should n't know one if I did!

[*Enter Cyrus Blenkarn, in shirt sleeves, with no coat; hair long and untidy: a keen, pale, thin man, with bent form, sharp features, restless, absent, distracted manner: he stands a moment or two at doorway, looking for someone. Seeing Chandler, he comes eagerly down to him.*

CYRUS. Mr. Chandler, could you give me an order for the iron fittings for my new kiln?

CHANDLER. Really, Blenkarn, this is very unceremonious! How do you expect people to trust you when you are always throwing your money away in useless experiments? How much will the fittings come to?

CYRUS. I 'm afraid they 'll come to nearly twenty pounds, sir.

CHANDLER. Can't you manage with ten?

CYRUS. I 'll try to make it do, if you 'll leave the order open.

CHANDLER. No, no. Todd will give you an order for fifteen to-morrow.

CYRUS. But I want to start to-day. I can't afford to waste any more time. I 've wasted so many years already. Can't I have it to-day?

CHANDLER. My dear good man, you can surely wait till to-morrow before you begin to squander my money.

LADY UMFRAVILLE. Ah, Mr. Blenkarn! That lovely dinner service Mr. Chandler gave us was your workmanship, was n't it? (*Cyrus assents.*) I 'm glad you put your own mark on it!

CHANDLER (*showing annoyance*). Ah — ra — Blenkarn — ah — ra. I think that 's rather an absurd practice of yours, putting your own private mark on your best pieces. It 's not necessary — not necessary — I would n't do it again if I were you!

CYRUS. Very well, sir.

[*His face falls; he shows intense disappointment.*

[*Todd enters.*

TODD. The balloon's just going up!

MAUDE. Oh, we must see the balloon. Come along, everybody. (*To Felicia.*) Where has Julian got to?

FELICIA. I don't know. He can't expect me to be always running after him.

MAUDE. When I have a lover, I shall expect him to be always running after *me*, and he may think himself lucky if he catches me!

[*Exeunt Maude and Felicia.*

CYRUS (*catching sight of Todd*). Mr. Todd, could you please let me have an order for some iron fittings?

CHANDLER (*interrupting*). Can't you see Mr. Todd is busy upon my Parliamentary business to-day? (*Softening.*) Come, go and fetch your coat and enjoy yourself for once. There's a balloon and fireworks, and I daresay I may make another speech. Enjoy yourself, my good man! Enjoy yourself!

[*Exit, followed by Todd. Cyrus stands absorbed, disappointed. Nancy appears.*

NANCY. May I come in please, Mrs. Chandler?

MRS. CHANDLER. Certainly, but you really ought to teach your father to take care of himself. Make him a little more presentable, if he's going to stay. (*Aside to Lady Umfraville.*) Mr. Chandler allows these Blenkarns to take the strangest liberties.

[*Exeunt Mrs. Chandler and Lady Umfraville.*

[*Nancy comes down to Cyrus, who has stood baffled, listless, disappointed, hearing nothing of above conversation. She takes him by the shoulders, and shakes him vigorously.*

CYRUS (*turning*). Eh? Oh, Nancy!

NANCY. Where's your hat? Where's your coat?

[*Cyrus rouses himself from his abstraction by an effort.*

CYRUS. Coat?

NANCY. Where did you take it off? Think!

CYRUS (*thinks. After a pause*). I don't think I put it on, Nancy.

NANCY. Where did you wear it last?

CYRUS (*after a pause*). I wore it to church last Sunday. Did n't I?

NANCY (*with a gesture of despair*). How could you come to Mr. Chandler's in such a state?

CYRUS (*innocently*). What state?

NANCY. Look at yourself.

[*Pointing to his clothes.*

CYRUS (*looks himself up and down*). Yes, it does look rather shabby, — but — it is n't Sunday to-day, you know.

NANCY. You told me you were n't coming to the garden party.

CYRUS. I have n't come to the garden party. I came to get an order on Mr. Woolaston. (*Suddenly starting off.*) I wonder if Mr. Woolaston —

NANCY. Listen! Now you are here, you 're going to stay and enjoy yourself with me and Mary.

[*At mention of Mary's name, Cyrus's face lights up with great animation and joy.*

CYRUS. Mary! Where is she? Why don't you bring her to me?

NANCY. You shall see her directly if you behave yourself. (*Looks all round.*) There 's nobody about! Sit down. (*Pushes him into seat.*) Let me make you tidy! (*She takes small brush and comb from pocket; beginning to comb his hair*). Did you have your dinner?

CYRUS. Dinner?

NANCY. Yes, I left it in the oven!

CYRUS. Did you? Then why did n't you tell me so?

NANCY. I told you so four times and showed it to you baking.

CYRUS. Did you? Then I suppose I must have had it! Yes, I remember now. I did have it. It was delicious. I 'm very fond of Irish stew.

NANCY. Irish stew! Why, it was a veal pie.

[*Gives a pull at his hair which makes him jump.*

CYRUS. Was it? I thought it was Irish stew!

[*Jesse Pegg enters: a young workman dressed in his Sunday best, with hair carefully pomatumed into a triangle three inches high in front. Knowing he is intruding, he stands at window a moment or two before he ventures to whisper.*

JESSE. Miss Nancy! Miss Nancy!

NANCY (*curtly*). Well?

JESSE (*comes in, treading very gingerly on carpet*). The balloon's just going up! I've saved you such a splendid place, close to me.

NANCY. How horrid of you!

JESSE (*with desperate earnestness*). Do come along.

NANCY. I can't. If you're not busy you might —

JESSE (*eagerly*). Anything! Anything! If it's for *you.*

NANCY. It is n't for me. It's for him. Run home and look all over the house and all over the works till you find his hat and coat and necktie, and bring them all here. You'll find me somewhere about when you come back. See how quick you can be.

JESSE. All right, I'm off.

NANCY. Oh, Mr. Pegg. (*Jesse stops.*) You'll find a veal pie in the oven! I wish you'd take it out!

JESSE. For *you!* If it's for you?

NANCY. Certainly. It's for my supper to-night, if it is n't burnt to a cinder.

JESSE. Thank you! Thank you! I'm so proud to be allowed to run on your errands.

[*Runs off.*

NANCY (*aside*). To think that little me should make such a fool of such a sensible fellow as Jesse Pegg.

CYRUS. If they could make that china a hundred and twenty years ago, why can't it be made to-day, Nancy?

NANCY. Hold your head still!

CYRUS (*getting excited*). You believe it's to be done, don't you?

NANCY. Yes, if you only keep quiet.

CYRUS. I'm sure of it! (*Getting excited, wagging his head to and fro.*) All the old receipts are wrong — I've tried them all. I tell you this, Nancy —

[*Starts up violently. Nancy has hold of his hair.*

NANCY. Will you sit down?

[*Puts him into settee again.*

CYRUS (*sits down submissively*). Shall you be long, Nancy?

NANCY. Two minutes if you keep still. Half an hour if you don't.

CYRUS (*schooling himself, sits very quiet for two or three seconds, then plaintively*). It's very kind of you, Nancy, but you comb my hair too much. You do nothing all day long but comb and make me tidy!

NANCY. That's the reason you're such a dandy!

[*Enter Mary.*

MARY (*comes down very gently*). Father!

[*Goes to him.*

CYRUS (*his manner changes to intense delight*). Mary, my dear! I haven't seen you for nearly a fortnight. You're quite well, my dear?

[*Kisses her.*

MARY. Yes, quite well.

CYRUS (*looking anxiously at her*). You're looking pale and worried, eh, Nancy?

MARY. No, no, it's nothing! I'm quite well! Let's talk about yourself. Tell me how you're getting on with your work. How have the new vases turned out?

CYRUS. Spoilt! They wouldn't stand the firing!

MARY. Never mind. Every failure brings you nearer to success.

CYRUS (*very much touched, gently takes her hand and covers it with kisses*). God bless my Mary! You're always kind to me! There's nobody in the world understands me but you, dear!

[*Kisses her hand. Mary withdraws it with a pained expression.*

[*Jesse Pegg enters with Cyrus's coat, hat, necktie. He is panting, breathless, exhausted; sits in chair, holds out coat, etc., helplessly to Nancy; sits panting.*

NANCY. What 's the matter?

JESSE (*hand on heart, breathless*). I've brought — hat — coat — all —

[*Drops the things helplessly into her hands. She takes them.*

NANCY. What made you run so fast?

JESSE (*with a look of reproach*). You commanded me — to make haste.

NANCY. I did n't tell you to bring on an apoplectic fit! Here, Mary! (*Giving clothes to Mary, who takes them.*) Make haste! (*Looking out of window.*) They 're all watching the balloon — you 'll have time to finish him before they come back.

[*Mary takes things, puts them on settee, helps Cyrus to rise, ties his necktie, makes him generally comfortable and tidy.*

[*Jesse has sat panting, slowly recovering.*

NANCY. Oh, you stupid!

JESSE. I did it for you, and you reproach me! I wish I was dead.

NANCY. Well, don't run yourself to death on my errands. Make it a case of *felo-de-se.*

JESSE (*looks at her ferociously for a moment, then goes determinedly to Cyrus, holds out his hand*). Good-bye, Mr. Blenkarn!

CYRUS (*surprised*). Good-bye, Jesse?

JESSE. I can't endure it any longer. Her scorn drives me mad. Good-bye.

CYRUS. But I can't spare you, Jesse. You 're the best workman I ever had. Where are you going?

JESSE. I don't know whether I shall commit suicide or go to Australia. (*Affected.*) You 'll think of me sometimes, Mr. Blenkarn — and there 's that bit of Brussels carpet I bought for her — you can keep that — and if

anything does happen to me — let her look at that carpet, and remember that Jesse Pegg would have used his heart's best blood to dye its crimson pattern if she had only asked him! Good-bye.

NANCY (*calling him*). Mr. Pegg! (*Jesse stops.*) If it would n't trouble you, I should like to see the sack race.

JESSE. Trouble! Trouble! (*Coming down to her.*) I 'll get you a place. Where would you like to sit?

[*Snatching at her hand.*

NANCY. In some place where you can't possibly get a chance of squeezing my hand.

[*Drags her hand away and runs off. Jesse follows.*

MARY (*having finished toilet operations, fondling Cyrus*). Father, would n't you like me to come back home and live with you always?

CYRUS. Of course I should, for my own sake — but we must think of your future!

MARY. My future!

[*With a look of shame and pain which Cyrus does not see.*

CYRUS. Yes, dear! You see I 'm a careless, thoughtless old fellow, and all the money I get goes somewhere. I don't know where it goes, but it does go somewhere, does n't it?

MARY (*caressing him*). Dear father, I 'm glad you don't like money.

CYRUS. Oh, but I do like it! I 'm very fond of it! I should like to be very rich; then I could carry on all my experiments: but I 'm afraid I shall always be poor.

MARY. Never mind. God can't think much of money, Look at the people he gives a lot to!

CYRUS (*musing*). It does n't matter for myself and Nancy — we shall always be able to shift for ourselves; but — you 're not like us. Ah, you don't know how proud I am of you, dear! And you 're in your right place here amongst great people! I want you to stay here always! I want to think when I 'm at home,

"Mary's safe — whatever happens to me, she's provided for! She's a lady, and some day perhaps some great man will see her and fall in love with her."

MARY. No, no, father! There's no fear of that!

CYRUS. Eh?

MARY. I mean — you're a very foolish old fellow to put such fancies into my head! You must n't be proud of me any more — never any more, — you'll break my heart.

CYRUS. Why, Mary my dear, what's this?

MARY. I mean you'll make me vain. Don't talk any more about me. Tell me about your work. How are you getting on with your new kiln?

[*Julian enters.*

CYRUS. Stopped! I wanted to work at it to-day, but Mr. Todd was too busy to let me have the order for the fittings, and I've got no money to buy them!

JULIAN (*coming down*). How much do you want, Mr. Blenkarn?

CYRUS. Oh, Captain Chandler, sir. How do you do, sir?

JULIAN. How much do you want?

CYRUS. For the fittings, sir? I'm afraid they'll come to nearly twenty pounds.

MARY. No — Captain Chandler — please not — it would n't be right for my father to take money from you!

JULIAN. Why not? All our money came from your father's invention. We owe him more than we shall ever pay him! Here, Mr. Blenkarn. (*Giving notes.*)

CYRUS. Thank you! Thank you!

JULIAN. Don't thank me! I wish I could make it more, but I'm not very flush myself —

CYRUS. Then I ought not to take this —

JULIAN. Yes — yes — take it. You ought to be at the head of the firm, instead of working for us. Besides, I shall get plenty out of the governor before I start.

CYRUS. Oh, well, then you'll excuse me — I'm so much obliged, so much obliged.

MARY. Father, where are you going?

CYRUS. To Mr. Woolaston's to buy the fittings. Good-bye, dear.

MARY. But Mr. Woolaston is here at the garden party. He has shut up his shop for to-day.

[*Going up to him.*

CYRUS. Has he? Then he must open it again. I can't have my kiln stopped for a garden party. Thank you, Captain Chandler — it's so kind of you, so kind. You'll excuse me. I must go — I want to get these fittings. Thank you! Thank you! So kind!

[*Shakes hands with Julian, and exit.*

MARY. You should n't have given him that money!

JULIAN. Why not?

MARY. Can't you see — it seems like — (*She stops, ashamed.*) Julian, how can I ask you? You must marry Miss Umfraville?

JULIAN. Marry her? No! I mean to get out of it some way or the other! I hope to heaven I shall get my quietus out in Africa, and there 'll be an end of me!

MARY. Hush! You must n't talk like this.

JULIAN. How should I talk? I've acted like a blackguard and a scoundrel. And you've been such a brick to me, Mary; as staunch as steel, as true as gold! What must you think of me?

MARY. I forgive you, Julian!

JULIAN. Don't forgive me! Hate me and despise me! I hate and despise myself!

MARY. No — no — Julian, you love me still?

JULIAN. Love you! You know I do! You know I'd marry you to-morrow if I dared.

MARY. If you dared.

JULIAN. How can I? With nothing but beggary to offer you. And to take you out to that cursed climate to die with me. No! I've brought enough misery on you — I won't wrong you any more.

MARY. Oh, Julian, what can I do? What can I do?

JULIAN. Stay here, Mary. If I live and come back to England (*Enter Chandler*), you shall be my wife. If I die, as I hope I may — well! I shall know you are safe and happy. Maude's fond of you, and you will always have a home here. If there's one thing I'm thankful for, it is that your secret will never be known.

MARY. Julian (*looks at him*), it must be known.

JULIAN (*shows surprise and fear, then bursts out — rises*). Oh, what a scoundrel I've been! What a coward and a fool I was to let my father gull me into this marriage! (*With great tenderness, going to her, puts his arms round her.*) Mary!

[*Chandler comes forward. They both show surprise and consternation, and fall apart. Mary shows intense shame.*

CHANDLER. Miss Blenkarn, Mrs. Chandler is asking for you.

(*Mary stands speechless and overwhelmed.*)

Do you hear, madam? Mrs. Chandler is waiting.

(*Exit Mary slowly.*)

(*Turns to Julian sternly.*) What's the meaning of this?

JULIAN (*summoning courage*). It means I've been a blackguard!

CHANDLER. What! You don't mean to say there's any chance of a public scandal?

JULIAN. No, there shall be no public scandal if I can stop it!

CHANDLER. Stop it! You must stop it! You know what these Tatlow people are. If this affair gets wind, it will lose me hundreds of votes. Come now, what do you mean to do?

JULIAN (*calmly*). I mean to marry Miss Blenkarn.

CHANDLER. What!

JULIAN. Look here, sir, I've been a fool. Don't force me to be a coward as well!

CHANDLER. I shall force you to keep your word to Miss Umfraville.

JULIAN. You will?

CHANDLER. I shall. Sir Seton's influence is necessary to me. If you break off your engagement with his daughter, he will withdraw his support.

JULIAN. But, father—

CHANDLER. I shall not argue the point with you, Julian. Come, the time's short. What do you say?

JULIAN. I shall marry Miss Blenkarn.

CHANDLER. Very well, sir. Then I shall not pay a farthing of your debts, I shall publicly disown you for my son, and when you leave this house to-day, you'll never return. Do you hear, sir? So pack up, and be gone.

[*Rings bell.*

JULIAN. Very well.

CHANDLER. And when you and your precious madam are starving together, you'll think what a fool you were not to accept my offer of a comfortable provision for her!

[*Cyrus enters.*

JULIAN (*seeing Cyrus*). Hush!

CYRUS. I can't find Mr. Woolaston anywhere. Have you seen him, sir?

CHANDLER. No, Blenkarn, no.

CYRUS. They told me he had gone into the house, too.

CHANDLER (*to Julian*). You'd better think it over, young man. (*Softening, drawing Julian down stage.*) Come, Julian, I don't want to be hard on you for this bit of boyish folly. But be reasonable. You must see that, if you split with the Umfravilles just now, it will ruin all my hopes, destroy my honourable ambition.

JULIAN (*indicating Cyrus*). But his hopes—*his* ambition for Mary—her life, poor girl!

[*Exit Cyrus.*

CHANDLER. I'll take every care of her, I promise you.

Don't break your engagement now, Julian. I would n't mind it in a year's time, when once I 'm safe in Parliament. Come, you 'll let things stay as they are.

JULIAN. I can't — it 's cowardly — it 's blackguardly!

[*Cyrus re-enters.*

CHANDLER. Hush! (*Looks round.*) Then you 'll marry her and bring her to beggary. Mind, I 'm determined.

JULIAN (*after a pause*). If I do nothing to break with the Umfravilles for a year, will you pay off my debts and give me the two thousand you promised?

CHANDLER. Certainly, I will. I —

CYRUS (*comes down*). Mr. Chandler, would you let one of the men —

CHANDLER (*irritated*). What is it, Blenkarn, what is it?

[*Takes him to window.*

CYRUS. Why, it 's Woolaston —

CHANDLER (*impatiently*). Yes, yes, anything you please! Send one of the men —

CYRUS. Thank you, sir. (*Going off.*) Here, Tom, Mr. Chandler says —

[*Voice dies away.*

CHANDLER (*to Julian*). Well? Yes or no?

[*Servant enters.*

JULIAN. We 'll let things stay as they are.

CHANDLER. A very sensible decision.

[*Shakes hands.*

[*Enter Todd. Mary appears at back.*

SERVANT. You rang, sir?

CHANDLER. Yes, let Mrs. Chandler and the family know that Captain Chandler has received an urgent telegram from London. He will leave by the five o'clock up express, instead of the night mail.

JULIAN. What?

CHANDLER (*to Servant*). Tell Williams to have everything ready.

[*Exit Servant.*

JULIAN. There is no need for me to leave before the mail.

CHANDLER (*after a look at Mary, determinedly*). I think there is.

TODD. What's this? Captain Chandler, going at once? I must wake up the brass band and get some men to take your horses out of the carriage and draw you to the station, eh, sir?

CHANDLER. By all means! By all means!

[*Exit Todd. Enter Maude, Mrs. Chandler, Felicia, Lady Umfraville and Sir Seton.*

MAUDE (*to Julian*). Julian, is this true? Are you obliged to go this afternoon?

MRS. CHANDLER (*to Julian*). Must you go, Julian?

CHANDLER. Yes, he is urgently required in London to-night. Miss Umfraville, there is only just time to bid him good-bye.

JULIAN. Our adieux have already been said. Have they not?

FELICIA. Yes, I suppose so. (*Takes off a flower she has been wearing.*) There's a keepsake for you.

JULIAN. Good-bye. I'm not good enough for you, Felicia.

[*Re-enter Todd.*

[*Julian embraces Mrs. Chandler and then Maude.*

TODD (*to crowd outside*). Now then! Three cheers for Captain Chandler! Hip! Hip! Hurrah!

[*Crowd cheers, band strikes up in distance, getting nearer and nearer till Curtain. Dutton enters with Julian's hat, coat, gloves, etc. Cyrus enters. Talks to Todd for a moment, then goes toward centre opening, trying as he does so to attract Mary's attention.*

JULIAN. Now, Dutton, look sharp!

MARY (*aside*). Will he go without a word?

[*Julian is saying good-bye all round, embraces his mother, sister.*

JULIAN. Good-bye, Maude! Mother! Felicia! Good-bye, Sir Seton. I leave Felicia in your care. If anything happens to me—

CHANDLER (*looking out of window*). The carriage is ready, Julian. You have n't a moment to waste.

[*Exit Dutton.*

JULIAN (*to Mary*). Good-bye, Miss Blenkarn. (*Looks round to see if he is unobserved. Then turns to her and says furtively.*) Mary, I —

[*Sees Cyrus, stops.*

MARY (*nerves herself with great fortitude*). Good-bye, Captain Chandler! I hope you will — I — I — I —

[*Breaks down, almost fainting; her father catches her in his arms.*

CYRUS. Mary, what is it? Mary —

JULIAN. Miss Blenkarn!

CHANDLER (*touches him on the shoulder*). Come, sir, come! Time presses!

JULIAN. But Miss Blenkarn is ill —

CYRUS. Yes, she 's —

MARY (*with desperate effort, recovers herself*). No — no — I 'm quite well. (*In a firm, determined, cheerful voice.*) I hope you will have a pleasant journey, Captain Chandler. Good-bye.

[*Stands calm and motionless throughout, betrays no emotion.*

JULIAN. Good-bye. Good-bye, Mr. Blenkarn.

CYRUS. Good-bye, Captain Chandler! Good-bye! Thank you! Thank you! I shall get to work to-night! Your kind present! God bless you! God bless you!

[*He wrings Julian's hand. Julian hastily withdraws it and rushes off. Band very loud.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE. *Cyrus Blenkarn's house. A plain sparely-furnished room, with cheap wainscoting and whitewashed walls. A fireplace down stage, right: a door up stage, right. At back, corded to the wall, are a pair of steps, which can be let down from Cyrus's workshop so as to furnish access to its door, which is some six or seven feet from the stage in the back wall. To the right of these steps on the wall at back are shelves with various specimens of china and earthenware. To the left of the steps a cupboard. Across the corner at left is hung on a rod a chintz curtain, which being drawn aside discloses a bench with materials for painting china and a chair in front of the bench. A window over the bench: a pair of high steps just below the chintz curtain, a door down stage, left. In front of the fireplace a long table with materials for painting china. Behind the table a chair in the centre of a strip of new, gaudy, crimson-flowered Brussels carpet.*

Discover Nancy on top of steps, arranging the curtain over Jesse's bench. Jesse is looking on. Nancy has just fixed the curtain in such a way as to hide Jesse's bench.

NANCY (*on steps*). There! Now when that's drawn you can't possibly see me!

(*Coming down steps. Jesse offers to assist her.*)

Go away, Jesse, go away!

[*She comes down steps, folding them up. Jesse puts steps against wall, then goes to Nancy's table.*

NANCY. Come! Get to your work! (*Jesse hesitates.*) Get to your work! Fix all your attention on it, and don't so much as remember that I am in the room!

[*He goes reluctantly behind the curtain and sits at his table. Nancy draws curtain. She goes to her table,*

seats herself at work, takes up vase and begins to paint it. Jesse gradually moves the curtain and peeps round it. She takes no notice but goes on painting, holding out the vase at full length to get the effect.

JESSE. Miss Nancy! Miss Nancy!

(*Nancy, sublimely unconscious, is studying the effect of vase.*)

(*Shouts*). Words are cheap enough, aren't they?

NANCY. It disturbs your peace of mind when I speak to you.

JESSE (*drawing curtain back and looking round*). It disturbs my peace of mind a great deal more when you don't speak to me.

NANCY. Then why do you stay here? Why don't you go into the works?

JESSE. And leave your father? You know he must have a workman always handy to help him. I will never leave your father.

(*Rises. Nancy takes no notice. Jesse comes determinedly down to her, stands a moment, then shouts fiercely at her.*)

I will never leave your father!

[*Nancy quietly puts down her vase, takes him by the arm, marches him up to his bench, seats him at it, then speaks in a cold, magisterial voice.*

NANCY. If I see or hear anything more of you for the rest of the morning, I won't speak to you for a week.

[*Goes back to table and sits.*

JESSE (*meekly*). Thank you. You shan't! I'll be as quiet as a mouse! Thank you so much! Thank you!

[*He gets quietly to work, painting vase on table. Enter Chandler and Mrs. Chandler, followed by Maude, Felicia, Sir Seton, and Lady Umfraville.*

CHANDLER. Good-morning, Nancy. I want to see your father.

NANCY (*glancing at ladder*). I'm very sorry, sir. His ladder's up.

CHANDLER. Oh, nonsense! Nonsense! Blenkarn! Blenkarn!

JESSE. Shy something heavy at his door, sir, and if that don't fetch him, I'll go round to the back and break a window. That's almost safe to bring him.

[*Chandler goes to Cyrus's ladder, and bangs at it with his walking-stick. Cyrus opens door an inch.*

CYRUS (*through chink of door*). Run away! Run away! Go and do some errands! Go and take a long walk! Don't come back again!

[*Slams door.*

CHANDLER (*loudly*). Blenkarn! Blenkarn! I say—

CYRUS (*opening door and looking out*). Eh? Oh!

[*Lets down ladder; stands at top of it very much embarrassed.*

CHANDLER. Come down, Blenkarn, I want to speak to you!

CYRUS (*coming down ladder*). I'm very sorry, sir—I didn't know it was you, or I shouldn't have told you to go and do some errands!

CHANDLER (*aside*). His girl has n't told him yet.

CYRUS (*apologetically to Sir Seton and Lady Umfraville*). I beg your pardon. I'm obliged to have that ladder, because, as soon as I set to work, a lot of people will come bothering me, and I can't get rid of them. I don't like to tell them they're a nuisance. And they always come just as I'm doing something important, don't they, Nancy?

NANCY (*flatly*). No!

[*Glaring at him.*

CYRUS. Yes, they do. You know they do.

CHANDLER. Blenkarn, I want you to show Sir Seton and Lady Umfraville over the works. You can explain the processes so much better than anybody else.

[*Cyrus's face falls.*

CYRUS. Not this morning, Mr. Chandler? I'm very busy this morning.

CHANDLER (*contemptuously*). Busy! My good man!

You've been busy these last twenty years, and what have you done?

CYRUS (*pause*). Well, I invented the glaze. The works were bankrupt when—

CHANDLER. When I bought your patent, and brought my energy and capital to bear on it. Come, Sir Seton and Lady Umfraville are waiting. You've got a lot of odds and ends here. You might begin by showing them your bits of old Tatlow!

CYRUS. Delighted, I'm sure— (*Showing great reluctance, languidly takes a teapot from cupboard, without interest.*) Teapot—date 1750—made by Aaron Shelton— (*With sudden flash of enthusiasm.*) Look at it! The new Tatlow would melt like wax in it. I've baked it for weeks and there is n't a crack in it. If I could only make a piece like that before I die! And I will! I will!

CHANDLER. Not you, Blenkarn! You'll never do it!

CYRUS. Oh, yes, I will!

CHANDLER. By the way, you're always wanting money! You might sell me your collection.

CYRUS. No, I won't sell that, Mr. Chandler. (*Restores teapot to place, takes out dish.*) Dessert service—1762—made by—by—(*Becomes bewildered, looks round helplessly.*) I can't remember anything this morning—

SIR SETON. Chandler, we'll look round the works at some other time when Mr. Blenkarn is at liberty—

[*Cyrus grasps Sir Seton's hand.*

CYRUS (*very warmly*). Thank you! Thank you! I'm just at work on the model for my new kiln, and it's very complicated; the fact is there are nineteen different ways of doing it, and I don't know which is right—and if you'll excuse me— Oh, there's Jesse Pegg! He knows the works a great deal better than I do, don't you, Jesse?

JESSE. Yes, Mr. Blenkarn, I'm ready.

SIR SETON. Come along then, Mr. Pegg. We 'll say good morning, Mr. Blenkarn! I can see you 'll be glad to get rid of us!

CYRUS. Yes, I shall. And if you 'll come some other day when I 'm not busy — in about six months' time — or a year — I 'll show you round myself. Jesse, mind you show them everything, and — and — (*Bolting hastily up ladder.*) Good-morning. Good-morning. So proud I 've seen you, so proud. Good-morning! Good-morning!

[*Draws up ladder and exit into room, closing door.*

JESSE. If you 'll come this way, please —

[*He goes to door and stops. Enter Todd.*

MRS. CHANDLER. Nancy, you will come with us. My daughter and Miss Umfraville are going through the works; they will require your assistance.

NANCY. Very well, Mrs. Chandler.

[*Exeunt Maude, Felicia, Mrs. Chandler, Lady Umfraville, Sir Seton, Nancy, and Jesse.*

CHANDLER. What is it, Todd?

TODD. Needham has brought the contract for the new works. He wants it signed at once.

CHANDLER. I 'm a little doubtful, Todd, about these extensive alterations. It mortgages all my capital for years. Suppose business was to go wrong —

TODD. You ain't losing faith in yourself?

CHANDLER. I shall never lose faith in myself, Todd. But suppose this old fool (*indicating Blenkarn's room*) was to find out the secret of the old Tatlow —

TODD. Well?

CHANDLER. It would knock all our present ware out of the market.

TODD. He 'll never find it out.

CHANDLER. No, and if he does, I could buy his patent of him for a five-pound note.

TODD. Yes, to be sure. (*Aside.*) Unless I bought it for ten.

CHANDLER. Very well, Todd. Then we'll sign the contract and start the works at once.

TODD (*going to Chandler*). Right. And if business gets a little shaky, you can turn the whole concern into a limited liability company, and clear out.

CHANDLER. Oh, quite so, quite so.

[*A knock at door. Enter Postman with letter.*

POSTMAN. Good morning, Mr. Chandler.

CHANDLER. Good morning, Carter.

POSTMAN. Letter for Mr. Blenkarn. As usual at this house, if there's only the old man at home, you might knock the blessed walls down and no one would hear you.

[*Puts letter on table near Chandler, and exit. Chandler aside, glances at letter, shows alarm and surprise, puts his hand over letter.*

CHANDLER. Todd, step across to Needham and tell him I'll be there to sign the contract in five minutes.

TODD. Yes, sir. (*Watching him, aside.*) What's up, I wonder? There's something in that letter.

[*Goes off slowly.*

CHANDLER (*peremptorily*). Did you hear?

TODD. Yes, sir.

[*Exit quickly.*

[*Chandler watches him off, then turns quickly to letter.*

CHANDLER (*after a look around*). From Julian! London postmark! What can he have to write to Blenkarn about? Unless it's— (*Looking at letter, and looking round.*) I suppose it would be considered dishonorable to open a letter — as a rule — and yet in a case of this kind it may be my duty — (*Looks round at Blenkarn's door, opens letter, takes out a slip of paper and an enclosed envelope, reads slip of paper.*) "If you love your daughter Mary, be sure she has this privately at once." (*Reads address on enclosed envelope.*) "Miss Mary Blenkarn." (*Hesitates.*) My public career is at stake. (*Opens letter.*) "Mary: Come to

me at Paris at once at the above address, and I will make you my wife before I leave for Africa. We are hurrying on, so don't delay. If I am obliged to leave Paris before you arrive, I shall leave all instructions for you to follow me. Make the best excuse you can at home. Don't let them suspect you are coming to me. I enclose notes for journey. Oh, my dearest, can you ever forgive me? Ever your Julian." (*Looks round, goes to fire, hesitates for some moments, finally puts letter on fire.*) There, you young fool! I've saved you from the fruits of your folly, and you'll thank me some day!

(*Before the letter has burned, enter Maude and Felicia. They are coughing. Chandler watches the letter burn.*) What's the matter, Maude?

MAUDE. We've been nearly choked in that horrid tile-room! Oh, papa! Is it necessary for the women and girls to do that terrible work?

CHANDLER. Necessary? Of course it's necessary. What would become of England's commercial prosperity if they didn't do it?

FELICIA. It's a wonder they're not all suffocated.

CHANDLER. Oh, they get used to it. In fact, after a time I believe they really get to like it. They must like it, or they wouldn't love and respect me as they do.

MAUDE. I suppose, papa, there's no doubt they do love and respect you?

CHANDLER. Doubt! You heard the Mayor's speech yesterday? I never heard a more glowing eulogium upon any man's private and public virtues than he pronounced on mine.

MAUDE. Yes, but, papa, you get all your wines and spirits from him.

CHANDLER (*very much upset*). Wines and spirits! Good heavens! That a child of mine should take such an incredibly low view of human nature as to suppose that a respectable wine and spirit merchant should be in-

fluenced in his political views by paltry considerations of trade! Get rid of such cynicism, my dear, get rid of it! It's degrading!

MAUDE. But you are a splendid customer to him!

CHANDLER. I encourage all local enterprise. You must surely see, Maude, that I am a great public benefactor to the town of Tatlow. Look at the entertainments yesterday — the fireworks alone — had the man down from the Crystal Palace on purpose. Really it does seem cruel that I should be obliged to point out my benevolence to my own daughter. But I suppose I must bear to be misunderstood, Miss Umfraville, like those other noble philanthropists who have preceded me.

FELICIA. Yes, which?

CHANDLER. Well — ah — ra — several. It would be invidious to mention any *one* in particular.

MAUDE (*taking out watch*). Quarter past twelve. (*To Felicia.*) Shall we have a gallop before lunch?

FELICIA. Yes, and get the dust of that tile-room out of our throats.

MAUDE. I shall never go there again. Oh, papa, I wish for those poor girls' sakes that England could do with a little less commercial prosperity.

[*Exeunt Maude and Felicia.*

CHANDLER. It's strange how little the members of my own family seem to appreciate me. (*Goes to fireplace, stirs ashes with poker.*) Yes, it's quite burnt. Now, if I can persuade the girl to hold her tongue and leave the neighbourhood without saying anything to her father —

[*Enter Todd.*

TODD. Needham's waiting for you to sign the contract.

CHANDLER. I'll go to him. By the way, Todd, you might just draw old Blenkarn; pump him a bit.

TODD. I will. Rely on me.

CHANDLER. We must take care to be on the safe side, Toddy.

[*Winks very slowly at Todd, who winks very slowly back at him. Chandler laughs. Todd laughs. Chandler exit. As soon as Chandler has gone off, Todd relaxes his wink, lays his finger to the side of his nose.*

TODD. Yes, we must take care to keep on the safe side, guv'nor. What luck some men have! What a position I could have made for myself if I had only happened to get hold of a greenhorn like old Blenkarn! Ah well, the old boy's just as green as ever!

(*Cyrus opens his door and appears at top of ladder. The ladder descends.*)

Here is the old moonraker!

[*Cyrus comes down ladder steps, muttering to himself, without noticing Todd.*

CYRUS. It won't come right — All my time wasted —

TODD (*very cordially*). Ah, good-morning, Blenkarn, good-morning!

CYRUS (*waking up*). Good-morning, Mr. Todd. My perforated bricks won't fit — they 're all wrong, I must get some more baked.

TODD. Of course. Tell Cousins to take your order.

CYRUS (*gratefully*). Thank you.

TODD. How are you getting on with your new experiments?

CYRUS. Splendidly.

TODD (*going up ladder*). I should like to have a look at what you're doing.

CYRUS. You can't. I never let anybody go into that room, except my daughter Mary. She 's the only one that knows my secrets.

TODD (*going up further, hand on door*). Oh, but I might be able to give you some advice, to help you.

CYRUS. Nobody can help me. (*Fiercely.*) Come down! You shan't go there. Do you hear? Come down, I say!

[*Todd comes quickly down.*

TODD. Oh, very well.

(*Cyrus goes up ladder, locks door and puts key in pocket. Re-enter Jesse and Nancy.*)

You know, Blenkarn, I take an enormous interest in you.

CYRUS. Oh, do you?

TODD. You don't know what a good friend I've been to you!

CYRUS (*mechanically*). No — yes — no — I forget.

TODD. And I mean to stick to you, I do! Now, if you make any discovery that means money, why not bring it to me?

CYRUS. Eh?

TODD. You can't work it yourself — you've got no capital. Well, we work it together and make a fortune out of it. See? Well, that's agreed between us. That's settled.

CYRUS. No, I don't think so, Mr. Todd.

TODD. No?

CYRUS. Mr. Chandler has been a good master to me. He has always advanced me money on my wages to carry on my experiments, and I think I ought to give him the first chance.

TODD (*glibly*). Of course! Of course! I was speaking entirely in Mr. Chandler's interest. Naturally, I should take it to Chandler — great, noble-hearted man, Chandler! Oh, I love him quite as much as you do. (*Aside.*) Damn him, he'll get your invention if I don't look smart. (*Aloud.*) Well then, you bring it to me, and I'll take it to Chandler.

[*Exit Todd.*

CYRUS (*after pause, during which he looks blankly round about him*). Now what was I going to do? — Oh, I know.

JESSE. Mr. Blenkarn!

CYRUS. Yes, Jesse?

JESSE. I'm going to talk to you for once in a plain, straightforward way!

CYRUS. No, don't, Jesse! I'm going to get some bricks perforated.

JESSE. You 'll stay and get your common sense perforated first.

CYRUS. Well, what is it, Jesse? Make haste.

JESSE. Years ago you invented the glaze which put the Tatlow Porcelain works, figuratively speaking, on their legs, put the town of Tatlow, figuratively speaking, on its legs, and put Joseph Chandler, Esquire, figuratively speaking, on his legs, and made him, as the Mayor said yesterday, an ornament, a glory and a bulwark to the British nation.

NANCY (*shows great interest*). Hear! Hear! Hear!

CYRUS. Yes, I know, Jesse — but you're wasting my time.

JESSE (*fixing him relentlessly*). And what are you today? Are *you* a glory, an ornament and a bulwark to the British nation? No! Are *you* putting up for Parliament? No! Are *you* owner of Tatlow Hall? No! Are *you* President of the Young Men's and Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association? No! Have you got a banking account?

CYRUS (*laughingly*). A banking account!

JESSE. No! Have you got a high hat? No! Or a brass knocker? Or a decent coat to your back, or a decent pair of shoes to your feet, or a sixpence to bless yourself with? No! No!! No!!! No!!!!

NANCY (*enthusiastically*). Hear! Hear! Hear! Hear!

CYRUS. I can't help it, Jesse.

JESSE. You must help it! You shall help it! And it is in the firm belief that you will help it, when you make your next invention (*waxing more eloquent with Nancy's encouragement*), that I grasp this opportunity of telling you, Mr. Blenkarn, what a fool you've been.

CYRUS. Thank you, Jesse, I know I've been a fool! I know I ought to have cared more for money! But there are thousands of men who can make money — it

is n't a very clever trick after all. There is n't a man in the world to-day who could make that vase! What would it matter to *me* if I had all the money in the country so long as I could n't turn out a bit of work like that! You don't understand me, my lad. Nancy does n't understand me. My Mary understands me! [*Exit Blenkarn.*

JESSE. There, Miss Nancy, you told me to speak to the point. Now did I?

NANCY. You were quite eloquent, Mr. Pegg.

JESSE. Was I? (*Approaching her fondly.*) If I was eloquent on that subject, what should I be on the subject of love?

NANCY. Dreadfully tiresome, so please don't begin.

JESSE. I must. I 'm going once and for all to lay bare all the anguish of my heart.

NANCY (*unconcerned*). Oh, please don't! Ugh!

JESSE. Aye, laugh at me, jeer at me! trample on me!

NANCY. I don't want to trample on you! I 've got your nice Brussels carpet to trample on.

JESSE. You trample on my gifts!

NANCY. What did you buy the carpet for?

JESSE. That its crimson flowers might whisper of my love to you and be a symbol of its blooming for you — when every shred of that Brussels carpet has melted into oblivion!

NANCY. Oh, I thought you bought it to keep my feet warm. (*Rises, takes her chair off the strip of carpet, moves the carpet away from bench, throws it away from her to centre of stage.*) Take your carpet! [*Puts her chair back, and sits and goes on with her work.*

JESSE (*has watched with growing indignation*). You refuse my gift?

NANCY. I can't take it now I know what the pattern means.

[*Jesse stands savagely looking at her for a few mo-*

ments, then deliberately sets to work, rolls up the carpet very resolutely.

JESSE. I was not unprepared for this crisis, madam.

(*Goes up to his bench, drags from under it a very large, well-worn, bulgy carpet-bag, with a bit of stocking and a coat arm hanging out of the side.*)

When you flouted me last night, I packed my poor belongings. Cold, heartless serpent! You've withered every spark of good in my nature! Now it matters not what becomes of Jesse Pegg!

NANCY (*unconcerned*). Where are you going, Mr. Pegg?

JESSE. To ruin, to madness, to despair!

NANCY. You'll just catch the 1.15 if you make haste.

JESSE. I shall. Some day, basilisk, you may be sorry you didn't accept my Brussels carpet in the spirit in which it was offered. I am going.

NANCY (*unconcerned, painting her vase — in a very pleasant tone*). Well, good-bye, if you must go.

JESSE. I mean it this time. Farewell! I warn you, inhuman, heartless monster, that you have wrecked me body and soul. When anybody asks you, "who murdered Jesse Pegg?" say, "I did."

[*With a shriek and a groan rushes tragically off, roll of carpet on shoulder, and dragging the carpet-bag after him.*

NANCY. The stupid fellow! And to think that he should be perfectly sane in all other respects! He's gone, I suppose. Well, I can't help it.

[*Enter Mary.*

MARY. Nancy, what have you done to Jesse Pegg?

NANCY. Nothing! He has taken offence and gone off to London, I suppose.

MARY. For good?

NANCY. I suppose so. He has really been quite unbearable lately.

MARY. How?

NANCY. Unbearably in love with me.

MARY. Is that so unpardonable, Nancy? Can't you see how he worships you?

NANCY. I don't want to be worshipped by Jesse Pegg. I don't like common people. What luck you've had, Mary!

MARY. Have I?

NANCY. I should like to be in your shoes.

MARY. Would you?

NANCY. Yes, to be living at Tatlow Hall with pleasant, refined people. Of course you deserve it, dear. I don't grudge you. But I should like to be admired by such men as Captain Chandler instead of Jesse Pegg.

MARY. Nancy, I'm going to give you a little advice. Jesse Pegg loves you dearly. Handsomeness very soon wears off. Kindness and goodness don't. Perhaps some day Jesse may come back again and ask you to be his wife. If he does, Nancy, take him; he's a good honest soul; take him, dear. (*Clasping Nancy.*) And thank God (*Nancy looks up*), yes, dear, thank Him with all your heart for giving you a man that can so reverence and worship a woman that he becomes like a fool in her presence. Thank Him that, though your lover seems common to you, he loves you so much that you can never become common to him.

NANCY. Mary! I've never heard you talk like this! What's the matter?

MARY. Nothing, dear. (*Subdues herself, and becomes quite calm and indifferent for the rest of the scene with Nancy.*) By the way, Nance, you've often longed for a watch — you may as well take mine.

[*Taking off watch and chain.*

NANCY. Oh no, Mary, I couldn't think of it. What will you do yourself?

MARY. I shan't want it. (*Hurriedly.*) There are plenty of clocks at Tatlow Hall. Come, I insist.

[*Holding up watch and chain to Nancy, who takes them admiringly.*

MARY. There! (*Pause.*) Won't you give me a kiss for it, Nancy?

(*Nancy kisses her, then turns away again.*)

You don't mind kissing me, do you?

NANCY. Mind kissing you?

MARY. There never were two sisters who loved each other better than you and I do, Nance.

NANCY. Never! But you didn't come all the way from the Hall to tell me that, did you?

MARY (*indifferently*). No. I came to have a little gossip with father. Where is he?

NANCY. Gone to get something for his new kiln. He'll be back directly. (*Looking at watch.*) Twenty minutes to one! Good gracious, I've been forgetting all about dinner! You won't be going yet.

MARY. Yes, I shall be going soon.

NANCY (*carelessly*). Well, good-bye. I shall see you on Sunday as usual!

[*Exit Nancy.*

MARY. You'll never see me again, Nancy. Oh, you are cruel, Julian. To leave me without one word, to let me face this dreadful shame alone! I can't do it! I can't.

[*Enter Cyrus, very excited, very joyful.*

CYRUS (*as he enters*). That's it! That's it! Why didn't I think of it before? How stupid of me! Mary! Mary, my dear! I'm so glad to see you! (*Kisses her.*) I've just found out the way to build my new kiln! There were nineteen different ways of doing it — all of them wrong — and just as I was coming along, it flashed across me how to do it — yes — it's as good as done. In a fortnight it will be in full work. And then I shall be able to try my new experiment — and, who knows, I may be able to make the old china after all.

MARY. I'm sure you will.

CYRUS. And Jesse Pegg has been giving me a good sound scolding. He's very sensible, Jesse Pegg is — sometimes — and he lectured me as I deserved. And what

do you think — I 'll tell you a secret — I 'm not going to be a fool any longer. I 'm going to make lots of money for you and Nancy. Tell me, dear, what shall I buy you when I 'm rich?

MARY. What would you like to buy me?

CYRUS. Everything that 's beautiful. A beautiful house, and a horse, and beautiful dresses to wear, silk and embroidery and lace and satin, and furs to keep you from the cold, and white soft dresses in summer — all white like your own soul, my Mary — when I 'm rich I should like you never to wear anything but white.

MARY. White — yes, I 'll wear white. But what will you buy for yourself, father?

CYRUS. Never mind about me. I shall spend all my money on you and buy you everything that you deserve. A new home to begin with —

MARY. A new home —

CYRUS. Yes, with a corner for me — unless — perhaps some day, Mary, you may want a new home with somebody else.

MARY. No, no, father —

CYRUS. Don't be too sure, dear — somebody will come and take you from me — and —

MARY. No, no, it 's quite — quite impossible.

CYRUS. What! You 'll stay with me always! How happy we shall be in the future.

MARY. Yes, how happy we shall be in the future. Father (*anxiously watching him*), as I was coming from the Hall just now, I saw poor old Mr. Viner standing at his door. He seems quite aged — quite broken — since — Mary —

CYRUS. Ah, no wonder! It would have killed me if my daughter —

MARY (*quickly*). But she 's dead!

CYRUS. Yes, poor girl! It 's a mercy her shame is hidden in the grave.

MARY. Yes, it 's a mercy.

CYRUS. What a pity she didn't die when she had the fever three years ago — she wouldn't have broken her father's heart then.

MARY (*anxiously*). Yes, death is far better than such disgrace, isn't it?

CYRUS. Yes, a thousand times better. There — there, don't speak of it. (*After a thought.*) And her name was Mary, too.

MARY. Yes, her name was Mary.

CYRUS. Ah, how different from my Mary! (*Seeing that Mary is crying.*) Come, come, my dear.

MARY (*with apparent indifference*). Well, I must be getting back to the Hall.

CYRUS. And I must be getting to my work. You know, dear, I love to have a talk with you, but I can't spare the time to-day. Look in to-morrow, will you?

MARY. No, not to-morrow.

CYRUS. Well, the day after — promise you'll come the day after.

MARY. I won't promise. (*Kissing him.*) Good-bye, dear. (*Kissing him warmly.*) Good-bye, my dear, dear father! God bless you! Good-bye.

CYRUS. Good-bye. (*Goes up ladder to his room, opens door.*) Ah, you shall see, dear. Your old father is not such a fool as they think him. He's going to make a great fortune for you, dear! You shall be rich and happy, and ride in your carriage, and everybody shall look up to you! Yes, dear, we shall see! Good-bye! Good-bye!

[*Enters his room, and closes door. The ladder remains down. Mary nods and laughs, and kisses her hand to him. The moment the door is closed, she bursts into a flood of tears, and stands mechanically repeating his words.*

MARY. "It would have killed me if my daughter — " "It's a mercy her shame is hidden — is hidden in the grave." "Death is a thousand times better." Oh, my

father, how shall I hide myself, how shall I spare you the blow? "Death is better!" (*Suddenly.*) You shall think me dead. I will go away. You shall hear that I have died in a strange country. And it will be true, for from this time forth I shall be dead to you. Yes, Mary Blenkarn, your child who never guessed what evil was, is dead. This is n't me! No, I am dead, and that is all you shall ever know of me. In a few months you shall learn that I have died — there will be no disgrace for you in that, and you shall never know how sinful and unhappy I have been. How can I save you from troubling about my leaving you? I 'll write — there 's a pen and ink in the next room. (*Looks round, goes to inner door, opens it softly, calls softly.*) Nancy! She 's upstairs. I 'm glad of that. I could n't bear to meet her again.

[*Exit Mary.*

[*Rather long pause. Jesse Pegg enters, sulky, crest-fallen, looks all round to see that nobody is about — flings his carpet-bag under bench — looks at Nancy's place, finally removes her chair, opens the roll of carpet along her bench, replaces her chair in position, till he is satisfied all is quite comfortable, sees the handkerchief she has taken off lying on her bench, takes it up, kisses it passionately again and again, puts it in his pocket, hangs up hat, takes off coat, sits down to work a moment, sees the curtain which is drawn on one side, rises, draws it across the place where he sits, so that it hides him. Re-enter Mary.*

MARY (*letter in hand*). I have thought of everything. If they follow me, they will think I have taken the express to London. Yes, that will be the surest plan of getting away. Forgive me for deceiving you, father. This will soften my departure — and when the news comes that I am dead, you must not grieve for me, father, I 'm not worth it —

(*Kisses letter, then places it on table; goes left.*)

(*Chandler enters.*)

(*Mary shows great shame.*) Mr. Chandler!

CHANDLER (*looking cautiously round — in a low, cautious voice*). My dear Miss Blenkarn, I want a word with you. We can perhaps speak better here than at the Hall.

MARY (*low voiced, deeply ashamed*). Go on, sir.

CHANDLER (*cautious, low voice, watching her keenly*). I have been thinking it would be wise of you to leave Tatlow.

MARY (*hurriedly*). Yes, I know. I am going.

CHANDLER. You have spoken to your father?

MARY. No, I 've written to him.

[*Indicating letter on table.*

CHANDLER. And you 've told him —

MARY. Nothing, only that I have not been very happy lately at Tatlow Hall, and not wishing to cause any unpleasantness between you and him, I have obtained a situation at a distance and have gone to it.

CHANDLER (*much relieved*). Very sensible — very sensible indeed. It shows great consideration for his feelings. And you go at once?

MARY. Yes, this morning, now.

CHANDLER (*intercepting her*). You will allow me to assist you?

[*Takes out note-case.*

MARY. No — except — there is rather over a month's salary due to me.

CHANDLER. Allow me to make it a hundred pounds — a hundred and fifty — you 're welcome.

MARY. No, only what is due to me. Not a farthing more.

CHANDLER. Very well, since you insist. (*Puts note-case away.*) But I should like to have shown my generosity.

[*Putting money on table.*

MARY (*taking up money*). Thank you. (*Going.*) Good-day.

CHANDLER (*intercepting her.*) Stay, I should like to have some news of you.

MARY. My father will have news of me soon. You will hear what has become of me through him.

CHANDLER. At least, you will allow me to express my regret — in fact, my sorrow — at the rascally conduct of my son —

MARY (*hiding her head*). Oh, please don't speak of it.

CHANDLER. Oh, I must — I shall write him what I think!

MARY. You have heard from him?

CHANDLER. Yes, no, at least, a telegram. He is nearly at Rome — to-morrow he will be on his way to Egypt.

MARY (*mechanically*). Rome — Egypt.

CHANDLER. I shall tell him that I consider his behaviour most shameful — to ruin and betray the daughter of a man whom I respect as I respect your father — I shall say —

MARY (*much agitated*). Oh, please, no more — let me go.

CHANDLER. Miss Blenkarn.

(*Mary stops. Cunningly.*) I may rely that you will not mention Captain Chandler's name —

[*Mary, at door, looks him full in the face for the first time.*

MARY. Do you think it possible I could?

[*Exit Mary.*

CHANDLER. Hum, she's a very foolish, quixotic girl! However, we're well rid of her. I wish she had taken a hundred pounds or so. It would have made my conscience quite easy. Well, I did offer it to her; it's her own fault. Lucky I happened to come across that letter of Julian's. The young fool! He'll soon forget her.

[*Exit Chandler.*

[*Jesse slowly draws aside the curtain.*

JESSE. What shall I do? How shall I tell him? I can't — it will break his heart. I'd better let it be, perhaps,

then he'll never know. It's no business of mine. Nancy's sister! And that villain gone off! He might be brought back. Yes, it is my business, and if anything's to be done, it must be done now. Yes, I'll tell him. (*Goes up to steps, shouts.*) Mr. Blenkarn, sir, Mr. Blenkarn, do you hear, sir? Mr. Blenkarn.

[*The door at top of ladder opens, and Cyrus appears.*

CYRUS. What is it, Jesse?

JESSE. I've got some news for you, sir.

CYRUS (*coming down ladder*). News, Jesse? Well, I'm so busy.

JESSE. About Miss Mary.

CYRUS (*quickening his steps*). About Mary? What's that?

JESSE. Well, sir, she's—

[*Cyrus comes to Jesse, examining his face. Jesse turns aside his face.*

CYRUS. Not bad news, Jesse? (*Jesse nods.*) But she was here just now. There's been no accident? She's not dead?

JESSE. No—

CYRUS. Thank God! Thank God!

JESSE (*very sadly*). Worse than that, sir.

CYRUS. Worse than death! (*Pause.*) What do you mean, Jesse?

JESSE (*after a pause*). I mean, sir, that Captain Chandler's as damned a villain as ever breathed.

CYRUS (*puzzled*). Captain Chandler! My Mary! (*Then shows that he guesses.*) It's a lie!

[*About to strike him.*

JESSE. It's the truth, as I'm standing here! Do you think I'd tell you a lie about such a thing, sir?

[*Cyrus stands overwhelmed for some seconds, then says very quietly:*

CYRUS. How do you know, Jesse?

JESSE. I heard it from Mr. Chandler's own lips just now. He offered Miss Mary money—

CYRUS (*stung*). He offered her money? Where is he? Fetch him to me. Where is he?

JESSE (*goes to window*). He left here a minute or two ago. There he is, going to his office! (*Goes to door, opens it and calls.*) Mr. Chandler! Mr. Chandler! You 're wanted here! (*To Cyrus.*) He 's coming, sir! Oh, Mr. Blenkarn, you see what you 've done! You 've made the father rich, and the son robs you of your own flesh and blood! Don't spare him, sir! Don't spare him! (*Chandler enters.*) Mr. Blenkarn wishes to speak to you, sir.

[*Exit Jesse.*

CHANDLER (*suspicious, discomposed*). Well, Blenkarn?

CYRUS. He says — he says — that my Mary — Captain Chandler — Oh, my God!

CHANDLER. I 'm very sorry, Blenkarn — deeply sorry, I assure you.

CYRUS. Then it 's true! And you knew! You knew and kept it back from me!

CHANDLER. I only learned it yesterday.

CYRUS. Yesterday? But that would have been in time! He was here yesterday, and — ah! (*Suddenly.*) I took his money. I 've got some of it now. He paid me! He paid me! (*Taking money out of pocket, dashing it on floor, trampling on it.*) Curse his money! Curse his money! Curse — curse — curse — Money for her innocence — oh, my Mary! Would I 'd died rather than this, my girl! My girl! My girl!

[*Sits on steps and sobs violently.*

[*Chandler after a pause goes to him.*

CHANDLER. Come, Blenkarn, don't give way! I sympathise with you — I do indeed, and I 'll see what can be done.

CYRUS (*rises*). You will? I knew you would! Thank you sir! Thank you! She 's a lady — she won't disgrace your family. You 'll send for him to make it right?

CHANDLER. I'm afraid that is out of the question, but I'll do what I can for you and your daughter.

CYRUS. There's only one thing you can do! It's his duty to marry her! Send for him!

CHANDLER. It would be useless! He's nearly at Rome by this time, and he cannot come back! He's on his country's business!

CYRUS. His country's business! But he's ruined my child! And she — what will become of her? You'll send for him — you'll send for him. Tell me where he is and I'll go myself! Where is he? Send for him, write, telegraph, send for him! I'll work for you! I'll slave night and day! I'll wear my fingers to the bone! Every hour of the rest of my life shall be yours, only save — (*Falls on his knees to Chandler, looks up for a moment or two, dumb with entreaty.*) My child, save her! Yes — yes — you will — you will — you must — you shall — yes — please save her, save her, save her, save her.

[*Falls dumb and breathless on his knees against table.*

CHANDLER (*after a pause*). This is quite useless, Blenkarn. It can answer no purpose.

[*Cyrus, in removing hand from face, catches sight of letter on table.*

CYRUS. What's this? A letter from her. (*Kisses it.*) Oh, my dear, my dear!

[*Tears it open, reads.*

CHANDLER (*watching him*). Perhaps it's as well he knows! He's too fond of her to make it public! And it will all blow over in a few days!

CYRUS (*on his knees*). She's gone! She's gone! She's left me! Left me!

CHANDLER. Well! Well! It's better for her to be away from Tatlow for the present! The truth need never be known! Come, Blenkarn, rely on me to do everything that lies in my power for both of you.

CYRUS. But you won't send for him?

CHANDLER. I cannot. I wish to act like an honourable man —

CYRUS. But you won't send for him?

CHANDLER. He would n't come. But I 'll provide handsomely for you — you shall be my under manager at the new works.

CYRUS. But you won't send for him?

CHANDLER. Really, Blenkarn, you make me angry! I 'll do everything in reason! I 'll make your daughter an allowance — any sum —

CYRUS. But you won't send for him?

CHANDLER. No!

[*Exit Chandler.*

CYRUS. Hear! Hear! Thou that holdest the scales! Judge between this man and me! A balance! A balance! Give justice here! I 've made him rich and proud — let me now make him poor and despised. He mocks at my grief. Let me some day mock at his! Let me hold his flesh and blood as cheap as he holds mine! Show me some way to bring him to the dust! Give him and his dearest into my keeping! Make them clay in my hands that I may shape and mould them as I choose, and melt them like wax in the fire of my revenge!

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE. *Shed containing Cyrus Blenkarn's firing ovens or kilns. At back a door, and a window, giving a view of a landscape in the English pottery district at night, with kilns vaguely seen by the flickering lights their fires give out. Down stage, right, a kiln burning; down stage, left, a kiln not burning; above it another kiln burning, with openings as in plan. A truckle bed down stage, left, against the window. A chair close to it. Seggars placed around the room. The scattered remains of a heap of coal.*

Discover Cyrus, seated on stool, gazing into the oven, which throws a glow upon his face. He has aged considerably; his hair has grown quite white, his face sharper and keener set — his whole appearance much wilder and poorer than in Act I — his dress quite in rags. He is apparently overcome with fatigue, and is almost asleep. Rouses himself with a start.

CYRUS (*looking intently into fire*). The heat's going down! I must keep it up. There's twenty more hours to burn! Nancy! Nancy! (*Calling off; then goes to coal heap, scrapes up nearly all that remains, shoves it in kiln.*) What shall I do for coal when this is gone? [*Nancy enters. She is dressed in mourning, very plain and inexpensive.*

NANCY. Yes, father.

CYRUS. Go to the railway yard. Try all the coal merchants. Tell them I'm firing over a thousand more specimens, and I'm bound to find out the secret at last.

NANCY (*listless and despairing*). It's no use, father. You know I went yesterday. They won't trust you any more.

CYRUS. Go again! If I don't have coal, these ovens will go out and all my work will be lost. Look, that oven has gone out.

NANCY. Father, would n't it be better to give it up?

CYRUS. Have you forgotten your sister?

NANCY. Mary is dead.

CYRUS (*hard, tearless*). Yes, she is dead. But the man who betrayed her is living. And his father, his father who might have saved her, is living. They live, these Chandlers, and I live, to humble them! Where 's Jesse?

NANCY. Asleep.

CYRUS. Asleep?

NANCY. You forget he 's been helping you the last three nights, and has had no rest.

CYRUS. What 's to-day?

NANCY. Thursday, and you have n't had any sleep since the night before you lighted the first oven.

CYRUS. I want no sleep.

NANCY. You can't keep on like this for ever!

CYRUS. No, not for ever, but long enough — long enough.

NANCY. Father, if you should break down, if you should die!

CYRUS (*with a calm, hard smile*). I can't die till my work 's done. Go and get me some coal! Offer them any price — ten, twenty pounds a ton. Don't take any denial! I must have it! I will have it!

NANCY. Poor father! Is he mad, as all the people say?

[*Exit Nancy.*

CYRUS (*taking up trial piece from bucket, puts it in water, looks at it*). No — it won't do — it 's as soft as dough, and it should be as hard as my heart!

[*Todd enters.*

TODD (*brisk, sprightly*). Well, Blenkarn, how goes it? What 's the latest? How are we getting on?

CYRUS. Badly, Mr. Todd. That fire went out yesterday.

TODD. Well, was n't it nearly time?

CYRUS. No, it ought to have been kept in a dozen hours longer at least.

TODD. Have you got any of the specimens?

CYRUS. Not yet — the oven is n't quite cool enough yet. I shall be able to get at them soon. But I expect they 're all spoiled, and if I don't get some more coals, these will go out too. Let me have five pounds more, Mr. Todd?

TODD. Not on our present agreement, Blenkarn. But I tell you what I 'll do. I 'll advance you twenty pounds more on condition that *if* you discover the secret of making the old Tatlow ware, I shall have the option of buying the patent from you for five hundred pounds.

CYRUS. I don't sell my patent.

TODD. But, my good man — look here, Blenkarn, you 're a decent sort of fellow, and I want to do you a good turn. I 'll advance you fifty pounds now, and give you a thousand down if you make the discovery. Come now, that 's fair, is n't it?

CYRUS. I don't sell my patent.

TODD. You won't come to any arrangement?

CYRUS. Our arrangement is made. You 've lent me thirty pounds, and when I discover the way to make the old ware, you are to find some man with money to put me in business.

TODD. Exactly — and I 've got my capitalist ready, and the moment I say "Go," down he planks his ten thousand pounds and off we go in a gallop. But where do I come in, Blenkarn? (*Plaintively.*) Where do I come in?

CYRUS. You are to be my manager.

TODD. Oh, no, it ain't good enough, Blenkarn. I must be a partner.

CYRUS. A partner!

[*He looks at Todd and says nothing.*

TODD. Aye, suppose you do make this discovery; you 'll want working. Everybody wants working in this age.

Advertise! Beat the big drum! Stick your name up at every railway station in England in bigger letters than anybody else! That's what does the trick with the great British public! Look what a great man I made of Mr. Chandler! And if you succeed in this invention, I can make a great man of you!

CYRUS. I don't want to be made a great man by you, Mr. Todd.

TODD (*looking at him, aside*). If the old bird should find it out after all. It would be all U. P. with my friend Chandler — especially with his big Stock Exchange specs which always turn out wrong.

CYRUS. The heat is going down still! Mr. Todd, let me have another five pounds. I'll give you fifty for it — I'll give you a hundred.

TODD. Not a farthing, Blenkarn, unless I stand in with the profits. What do you say?

CYRUS (*tempted for a moment, then firmly*). No, my profits shall be my own for the future.

TODD. You're a very obstinate, self-willed man.

(*Chandler crosses the window.*)

Chandler! Not a word to him about our little affair!

CYRUS. I have no dealings with Chandler.

[*Chandler enters at back; shows slight surprise at seeing Todd. Cyrus sits on truckle bed.*

CHANDLER (*loud patronising voice*). Well, Blenkarn!

(*Cyrus takes no notice.*) Blenkarn! I hear you've got into very low water, and just to show you that I don't bear you any malice for leaving my employ, I've come to offer to take you back.

CYRUS. I'm not so low as that!

CHANDLER. You were foolish to leave me after having been a faithful servant to me for so many years.

CYRUS. I served you faithfully, did I?

CHANDLER. Yes, and you ought to have taken the position I offered you as second manager in the new works.

CYRUS. I've done better.

CHANDLER. Come, come! You know you're in debt!

CYRUS. Yes, I'm in debt. I owe you something, don't I?

CHANDLER. There was a trifle.

CYRUS (*with meaning*). I shall pay you.

CHANDLER. Oh, I'll put that in the bargain.

CYRUS. What bargain?

CHANDLER. I'll take you back for a term of six years at four hundred a year on condition that any little improvements you may happen to make in porcelain during that six years belong to me.

(*Turning to Todd.*)

I think that's a very generous offer, Todd?

TODD. Generous! It's magnificent! It's quixotic!

CHANDLER. Candidly, Todd?

TODD. On my honour — you know I never flatter.

CHANDLER. Ah well, you heard my offer, Blenkarn; what do you say to it?

CYRUS. Nothing.

[*Turns his back on Chandler.*

[*Todd beckons Chandler down stage; the following conversation confidential.*

TODD. You're very well out of that! He'll never discover the secret of the old Tatlow.

CHANDLER. It would be awkward for me, Todd, if he did! Here's trade falling off, and I'm bound to go on with the new works. And did you see there's another big fall in Cornubians again?

TODD. I should sell out.

CHANDLER. And drop ten thousand! It seems as if everything was turning against me.

TODD. You're safe enough. Can't you see he's as mad as a hatter?

CHANDLER. Think so?

TODD. Sure of it. I've pumped him. Poor old fellow, in less than three months he'll be in a lunatic asylum.

CHANDLER (*placidly*). Well, I don't wish him any harm, but taking everything into consideration, perhaps that would be best for all parties.

TODD. Exactly. Suit us all down to the ground.

CHANDLER. They're very kind to the people in such places?

TODD. Treat 'em like fighting cocks. Don't you trouble any more about his blessed old Tatlow — it's a dream, a myth, a delusion, a sell!

CHANDLER. I hope so. (*Takes out his watch.*) Kempster was to be at the office at seven — you'd better go to him.

TODD. Yes. Ain't you coming?

CHANDLER. I want a word with Blenkarn first.

TODD (*aside*). He means to nail him, and then what's to become of me?

CHANDLER. What are you waiting for?

TODD (*apparently surprised*). Eh? Simply absence of mind — unconsciously waiting for you — sort of wish that you would come with me. (*Aside.*) Hang it all! [*Exit Todd.*

[*Chandler looks at Cyrus. Cyrus takes no notice. Chandler fidgets with his umbrella, coughs.*

CHANDLER (*embarrassed*). Hm, Blenkarn! Blenkarn! This is really terrible about your poor daughter Mary.

CYRUS. She does n't need your pity.

CHANDLER. No, but I assure you the news of her death touched me very deeply.

CYRUS (*looks at him*). Ah!

CHANDLER. For the last two months I've been coming to offer you my sympathy, but I have put it off and put it off!

CYRUS. Put it off a little longer.

CHANDLER. You don't want my sympathy.

CYRUS. Not yet — I'll send for you when I want it.

CHANDLER. You're a strange man, Blenkarn! You don't seem to feel your daughter's loss.

CYRUS. No, I have n't shed one tear. My heart has been dry, so have my eyes. I have n't thought much about her death. I 've had other business. When that 's done, I shall have time to remember that she 's dead, and I 'll send for you.

CHANDLER (*aside*). His favourite daughter dead, and he not troubling about it! Gives all his thoughts to his inventions! If he should make the discovery! I must buy him somehow! It won't do to run the risk! Yes, I must make it safe.

[*Enter Nancy.*

CYRUS (*eagerly*). Well, what do they say?

NANCY. They won't trust you.

CYRUS. Did you try all of them?

NANCY. Yes, every one! I offered them any price they liked! But it was no use! They know we have no money!

[*Cyrus, with a gesture of despair, sinks upon stool, dazed and dejected. Chandler beckons Nancy to him.*

CHANDLER. He 'd better come back to me! (*Nancy looks enquiringly at him.*) I 've forgiven his ingratitude, and I 've offered to take him back at a salary of four hundred a year!

NANCY. You 're very kind, Mr. Chandler, but (*shaking her head*) he won't come.

CHANDLER. If he does n't, you 'll both starve. Come, you 're a sensible girl. Give him a good sound talking to! Bring him to his senses! (*To Cyrus.*) Blenkarn, I shall consider that matter open! I 'll look in again in half an hour for your answer!

[*He looks at Cyrus, who sits absorbed taking no notice; then exit.*

NANCY (*looking at Cyrus, aside*). Perhaps Mr. Chandler is right. It would mean rest and comfort for his old age, instead of beggary and work. I 'll try! (*Goes to Cyrus.*) Father! (*Cyrus is still abstracted.*) Father!

CYRUS. Yes, Nancy!

NANCY. Suppose these thousand specimens all turn out wrong, what will you do then?

CYRUS. Make another thousand.

NANCY. But you've sold everything — you've even parted with your collection — where's the money to come from for fresh experiments?

CYRUS. I must earn it.

NANCY. And if *they* turn out wrong, what then?

CYRUS. Begin again.

NANCY. But we shall starve. Father! Hear me! I'm your only child now. If you were to find out this invention, and make a fortune, if you were to own all the county, you could only leave it to me. I don't want it. I don't want to be rich! But I do want food and clothes, and you know how many times lately I've not had enough to eat.

CYRUS. It is hard. Have patience, Nancy! Who knows? I may have found out the secret! It may be firing in one of these ovens now! I must find it out soon!

NANCY. That's what you've said all your life. You began trying to make the old China twenty years ago, and to-day you're as far from it as ever.

CYRUS. No, I'm twenty years nearer!

NANCY. You'll never be nearer! Father, if you love me, be wise at last. I don't beg for myself, but for your own sake. Give up this mad dream, and spend the rest of your life in quiet and plenty. Take Mr. Chandler's offer.

CYRUS. Ah! (*Nancy drops on her knees.*) Take Mr. Chandler's offer! Sell myself to the father of the man that robbed me of my dead dear one, and perhaps brought her to her grave. Give up my life's work! Give up all my labour and thought! Ah! That's like you, Nancy! You never believed in me! Mary, my Mary, you believed in me! If you were here now! And I told you that death was better than living shame! I

did n't mean it, dear! I would n't mind your shame if you could come back to me. I would help you bear it, and you would help me with your soft, low voice and loving ways. Mary! Mary! Mary! You would n't have spoken to me as your sister has done!

NANCY (*deeply touched*). Father, forgive me! Forgive me! I did n't mean it! I only said it for your own sake! I 'll never be unkind to you again! Father, let me help you. Let me take Mary's place now she is gone!

CYRUS (*kissing her*). So you shall, dear! God bless you! God bless you! (*Very tenderly, then looking round, remembering.*) I 'm forgetting my work.

NANCY. And I too! What can I do? That oven! Can I help you get the specimens out?

CYRUS. No, it 's not quite cool enough yet! I used such heat, Nancy, as I 've never used before! And to think I had to let it out for want of coal!

NANCY. Perhaps some of the pieces may be thoroughly fired.

CYRUS. That 's right. Good girl. Call Jesse, and get him to fetch some wood.

NANCY (*calling off*). Jesse! Jesse!

CYRUS. He 's not to touch the pieces in that oven. I want to take them out myself. (*Looking at fires.*) Going down! If they would but let me have a little more coal — a ton only! I 'll try them again! I 'll go myself! They must listen to me! They 'll never let all my work perish for the sake of a few shillings! Keep the fires up while I 'm gone, dear. Get Jesse to help you. Don't let them go out. They must n't go out! They shan't! Keep them white hot — they keep me alive! While they burn, my hope and life burn too!

[*Exit Cyrus.*

NANCY (*up at door*). He 'll never rest till he has done it, or till he is in his grave!

[*Enter Maude.*

MAUDE (*uncertain, timid*). Nancy, I knocked at the door, but you were n't in the house. You 'll forgive my coming here? I came to tell you how sorry I was to hear — about Mary.

NANCY (*restrained*). Thank you.

MAUDE. Nancy, what is this mystery about her? Why did she leave us so suddenly? Why did she go away from England? There 's no doubt she is dead?

NANCY. What doubt can there be? We received the newspaper containing the account of her death.

MAUDE. She died at sea, did she not?

NANCY. Yes.

MAUDE. What made her leave her home?

NANCY. Please say no more.

MAUDE. Forgive me. I ought to have known better than to have spoken. But, Nancy — don't be angry with me — it was not curiosity. It was because I loved Mary, and — we are friends, are we not? (*Nancy does not speak.*) Won't you speak to me? (*Holds out her hand.*) For Mary's sake, Nancy!

[*Nancy impulsively takes Maude's hand and kisses it.*

NANCY. Thank you, thank you, Miss Chandler, for your love for her.

MAUDE (*taking out purse*). And, Nancy, you will let me help you.

NANCY. No — I can't take any money from you, Miss Chandler.

[*Jesse enters, stolidly watching.*

MAUDE. Don't show pride to an old friend, Nancy.

NANCY. It 's not pride, but I can't take your money, Miss Chandler.

[*Jesse comes stolidly down, stares suspiciously at Maude. Maude shows embarrassment.*

MAUDE (*confused*). Oh, Mr. Pegg, you are not in our works now?

JESSE (*stolidly*). No.

MAUDE. I hope you are well and happy.

JESSE. Middling.

[*Stares at her.*

MAUDE (*her embarrassment increases — aside*). He used to be so civil. What can have happened?

[*Exit Maude.*

JESSE. Why didn't you take the money? Spoil the Egyptians, I say!

NANCY. I've promised my father never to take a favour from them.

JESSE. Did you see the news in the paper this morning?

NANCY. About the African expedition?

JESSE. Yes. Captain Chandler has been distinguishing himself again. Daring act of bravery and hairbreadth escape! I wish the black devils had killed him!

NANCY. What good would that do, now that Mary is dead? You'll look after the ovens till my father comes back?

JESSE. Don't go, Miss Nancy! (*Abjectly.*) Don't go! While you're here, this place is like a little heaven below, and when you're gone it's like a little — other place.

NANCY. And what are you?

JESSE. When you're kind to me, I'm nearly good enough to be an angel, but when you despise and maltreat me, I feel (*vigorously stirring the furnace with poker*) — I'm a lost spirit, pitchforking other lost spirits, and (*gloating*) I like it. Oh, Nancy, do try to love me! Do try! If at first you don't succeed, try, try again! Won't you try?

[*With abject persuasion.*

NANCY (*firmly*). No.

JESSE (*fiercely*). You won't? (*Glares at her.*) You won't even try?

NANCY (*firmly and louder*). No!

(*Jesse stands scowling at her.*)

Listen to me, Mr. Pegg. The more I try to love you,

the more I don't succeed. Now perhaps if I were n't to try at all —

JESSE (*eagerly, overjoyed*). Do you think so? Then don't try to love me any more!

NANCY (*composedly*). Very well, I won't.

JESSE. I mean, yes, do. Can you bring me any good, sound, solid argument why you should n't marry me? No, you can't.

NANCY. Attend to the ovens. That 's right. Now we 'll talk about something else.

JESSE. No, now we 're on the subject of marriage, let 's argue it out.

NANCY. No, we won't begin arguing before marriage. There 'll be plenty of time for that afterwards.

JESSE. Then you will? Oh, it 's too much! It 's too much! It can't be true! Nancy, it is n't true! Is it true?

NANCY (*very collected and calm*). Not at present. Listen to me. I don't love you —

JESSE. That 's of no consequence. I —

NANCY. Hold your tongue!

JESSE (*meekly*). Yes.

NANCY. I don't altogether dislike you —

JESSE. Thank you, oh, thank you — thank you so very much.

NANCY. Hold your tongue! I daresay we might get on very comfortably together as man and wife.

JESSE. I 'm sure of it! I 'll take my oath of it. And —

NANCY. Will you be quiet? Now if I were to promise to marry you, Jesse, would you —

JESSE (*jumping down her throat*). Yes, that I would! Anything. You shall have your own way in everything! Keep all the money! Go to Church or Chapel, just which you like! Keep the beer in the house so that I shall never have any excuse for going to a public! I 'll never say an unkind word to you! I 'll never get out of temper, even on washing day! I 'll wait on

you in health and sickness. I'll let you have your breakfast in bed! There, Nancy! What more could I promise?

NANCY. Nothing. You certainly promise enough. But I'm not thinking of myself. Jesse, tell me, do you think father will ever discover the secret of the old Tatlow?

JESSE. I'm afraid he won't, Nancy.

NANCY. And I'm afraid too. But he'll never give it up. And we must encourage him and help him and take care of him in his old age.

JESSE. He's your father, Nancy. He shall be mine too.

NANCY. Thank you, Jesse. I'm going to ask you to make a great sacrifice. I give you my word I will marry you—

JESSE (*with a frantic shout of delight*). Oh!

NANCY. Be quiet! I will marry you—

JESSE. Oh! It's too much!

NANCY. Some day—

JESSE. No hurry, Nancy—at least, no great hurry.

NANCY. I know you have saved some money. (*Jesse shows disquiet.*) You had nearly a hundred pounds. I want you to lend it to my father. Will you?

JESSE (*looks uncomfortable*). I'm very sorry, Nancy, I would if I could, but it's gone!

NANCY. Gone? How? (*Pause.*) Where?

JESSE. I've lent it to your father to carry on his experiments.

NANCY (*deeply touched*). Jesse!

JESSE. He was afraid you'd be angry with him, so he made me promise I would n't tell you.

NANCY. You lent it to him, though you knew it would come to no good?

JESSE. I did it because I love you, Nancy.

NANCY (*very softly, very quietly, giving him her hand*). I will be your wife, Jesse.

JESSE. Thank you, Nancy. You shall never be sorry.

[*Enter Cyrus at door in flat.*

NANCY. Father! What success?

CYRUS. None! They refuse me! They laugh at me! They tell me I 'm mad! When I came to Tatlow, it was bankrupt, its trade was in ruin, its people starving. My invention, the fruit of my brain, fed it, and clothed it and brought it to prosperity! And now it laughs at me and tells me I 'm mad! I suppose I am mad! I have n't fattened myself on another man's labour and tears! I must be mad! God made this world for parasites! I must be mad! A leech's mouth to fasten on your neighbour and suck all his blood from his heart! That 's sanity, and I 'm mad, my girl, for I have n't done it! Ah, what have you been doing? The heat has gone down, and I shall never get it up again! All my work will be lost!

JESSE. I 'm very sorry. There 's no coal.

CYRUS. Some wood then! If I could only keep these fires in for a few hours longer! Who knows — I may have discovered the secret? And I shall lose it all for want of a little fuel! No, I won't though!

[*Seizing chair, breaks it up, and throws it on fire.*

NANCY (*trying to stop him*). Father, what are you doing?

CYRUS. Let me be! Let me be! I 'm not mad! Another hour, another half hour may give me the secret I 've been working for all my life! (*Nancy again tries to restrain him.*) Let me be, I say! They shan't go out while there 's a stick or shred about the place that will burn. Some wood, Jesse! The palings outside! Anything that will burn! Get it! D'ye hear? You too, Nancy — make haste.

(*Exeunt Nancy and Jesse.*)

(*Looking round.*) All my work lost if I can't keep these fires in. If I could get at this oven. It must be cool enough by this time. (*Tearing down bricks.*) Come down, will you? Let's see what you 've done for

me after all my labour for you. (*Taking out specimens, which are melted into all sorts of shapes.*) What! Could n't you stand it? (*Taking out another.*) I've shrivelled you, have I? You too? (*Taking out another.*) All alike, all good for nothing. Nancy is right — I'm no nearer than I was twenty years ago. (*Another piece.*) All to begin over again. All my life wasted. (*Takes out a white vase, looks at it, whispers.*) I'm not mad! No, but I'm dreaming again. I've dreamed it so many times, and always waked to find it only a dream. But — (*Looks at it again, bursts into a long scream of delight. Jesse and Nancy enter with a large log.*) Nancy, Nancy, look, my dear! Look, Jesse, I'm awake, am I not? Look! I've found out the secret! Look! — Starve? We're rich, my girl, rich! You shall ride in your carriage, for I've done it! I've found the secret at last! I've done it! I've done it!

[*He kisses her, bursts into hysterical laughter, drops on bed, rocking to and fro. Knock at door.*

CHANDLER (*heard outside*). Blenkarn! Blenkarn!

CYRUS. Come in.

[*Enter Chandler.*

CHANDLER. I've been thinking things over, and I'll buy any patent that you may bring out. — What's the matter, Blenkarn?

CYRUS. Nothing. You'll buy — ?

CHANDLER. I'll buy — What is it, Blenkarn?

CYRUS. Go on — You'll buy —

CHANDLER (*looking at him*). I'll buy —

CYRUS. What? My body and soul? Buy back the past thirty years! Buy back my girl from her grave in the sea! Buy back the sweat of my brow and the strength of my hands that I've wasted for you? *You'll* buy! No, *I* buy now! I buy *you!* Do you know the price I've paid for you? I've given the toil of my life! I've given hunger and tears and despair and agony!

I've given my child to be your son's mistress! That's the price I've paid for you, but I've got you! I've bought you! You're mine! You're mine! You're mine!

[*Cyrus, laughing hysterically, staggers to bedside as curtain falls.*

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE. *Tatlow Hall, as in Act I, but there are some changes in the furniture, and it is differently arranged. Discover Chandler, with hands in pockets and in a despairing attitude. Enter Mrs. Chandler and Maude, crying. They are in outdoor clothes.*

CHANDLER. Are you ready?

MRS. CHANDLER. Quite. I've sent everything on to Florence Cottages! Florence Cottages after Tatlow Hall! Six rooms after this!

MAUDE. Never mind, mamma! We shall be all the closer to one another, and learn to love each other all the more!

MRS. CHANDLER. Joseph, could n't we leave Tatlow altogether?

CHANDLER. Where could we go? It costs money to move, and I've got none.

MRS. CHANDLER (*weeping*). To have to leave our home the very day that Julian is coming back; to receive our hero, a national hero, at that place!

MAUDE. I don't think Julian will mind for himself. He was never selfish.

MRS. CHANDLER. But what will his wife think of us?

MAUDE. Let's hope he's married somebody very nice who'll think just as much of us in our new home as if we were living here!

CHANDLER. You ought to have let me write to tell him I was a ruined man!

MRS. CHANDLER. He'll know it soon enough. Mr. Vachell might have allowed us to remain here a few days longer! Can't you ask him, Joseph?

CHANDLER. No. He writes I must be prepared to give up possession and to go out at twelve o'clock to-day. He has already kept the place going for us the last six weeks, and paid all expenses.

MAUDE. It's almost twelve now. Come, mamma, let's take one last look round the old place. We may never see it again.

MRS. CHANDLER. Who would have thought that it would ever come to this?

[*Going off at conservatory.*

MAUDE. Won't you come with us and say good-bye to everything?

CHANDLER. No. I don't want to be reminded of what I was and what I am. (*Maude comes a little nearer.*) Go away, Maude.

MAUDE. Poor papa!

[*Joins Mrs. Chandler in conservatory, and goes off.*

CHANDLER. It's a hard world! A blackguard, cruel, heartless world! It's got no pity for a man!

TODD (*outside*). Never mind! I'll find him!

[*Enter Todd at back, very brisk, sprightly, in capital spirits.*

TODD. Hillo, Chandler!

(*Chandler rises and shows some respect to Todd.*) How goes it? Just passing, so I thought I'd give you a look in! So you're clearing out, eh?

[*Cheerfully.*

CHANDLER. Yes, Todd. Vachell is coming at twelve to take possession.

[*Todd, sitting at his ease in centre chair, regards Chandler for a few seconds with an expression of amused contempt; then speaks in a cheerful, philosophic tone.*

TODD. You've made a pretty mess of your affairs, Chandler.

CHANDLER. You need n't remind me of that, Todd.

TODD. Oh, I'm always perfectly candid with you! You

know I never flatter. You should have taken my advice, Chandler, and made me your partner.

CHANDLER. But Blenkarn has n't made you a partner.

TODD. No. You see Pegg, being his son-in-law, naturally came first. But I 've got a rattling good berth! Much better than I had with you!

CHANDLER. The business has increased a good deal, I understand.

TODD. Rather! We 're coining money, like dirt! This new ware is knocking everything else out of the market.

CHANDLER. I 'm so glad! I 'm delighted! I thought perhaps there might be a vacancy for an under-manager?

(*Todd whistles.*)

You might say a good word for me to Blenkarn, Todd.

TODD. Ah! Well —

CHANDLER. The fact is, things are much worse than I expected — there will be a much smaller dividend than I hoped. It 's absolutely necessary for me to get some employment at once to keep my family out of the workhouse.

TODD. That 's awkward. What the deuce made you plunge like you did on the Stock Exchange?

CHANDLER. I did it to right myself when I found things were going wrong; and you know, the more I plunged, the deeper and deeper I got in the mess. Well now, did you ever know anybody have such bad luck as I had?

TODD. Bad luck? Bad judgment, you mean.

CHANDLER. But you advised me, Todd. You were my right hand!

TODD. Not when I saw how things were going. While Batty Todd worked you, *you* were a big man. Now Batty Todd works Cyrus Blenkarn, *he 's* the big man. I 'll tell you a secret, Chandler! It is n't *you*, it is n't *Blenkarn*, it 's Batty Todd that 's the big man. Batty Todd pulls the strings and —

[*Business of illustrating marionettes.*

CHANDLER. Oh, quite so, Todd, quite so! You know I always had the highest opinion of you! You're quite a genius in your way, Todd!

TODD. I am, and let me tell you, Mr. Cyrus Blenkarn is a devilish lucky fellow to get hold of such a chap as Batty Todd!

CHANDLER. When do you expect Blenkarn back?

TODD. Can't say. We haven't heard from him for two or three weeks.

CHANDLER (*piteously*). I suppose you and Pegg couldn't give me a situation in his absence?

TODD (*clapping his hand on Chandler's shoulder*). My dear Chandler, nothing would please me better than doing a good turn to an old friend like you. But, candidly, you wouldn't be worth a penny a month to us; candidly, you wouldn't.

CHANDLER. You don't seem to admire me so much as you used, Todd.

TODD (*shrugs his shoulders*). Well — umph.

CHANDLER. What would you advise me to do?

TODD. I should emigrate.

CHANDLER. I don't think I'm suited for that.

TODD. Try something you *are* suited for.

CHANDLER (*piteously*). But what am I suited for? I managed the old works for twenty years.

TODD. Excuse me! *I* managed them. *You* took the money.

CHANDLER. Well, I was the head of the concern.

TODD. The figure-head, you mean.

CHANDLER. I don't see what else I'm fit for.

TODD. No, figure-heads aren't much use in the navigation of the ship, are they?

CHANDLER (*very low tone, piteously*). I've come to my last shilling, Todd.

TODD. Have you though? You don't mean to say it's as bad as that? Well, I must be going —

CHANDLER (*piteously*). You won't forget me, Todd?

TODD. Rely on me. I won't forget you. By the way, don't call again at my office. I 'm so busy just now. If anything turns up, I 'll let you know. Well, good-bye. (*Cheerfully.*) Keep your spirits up — hope things will turn out all right for you.

CHANDLER. Thank you, Todd. You were always a thoroughly good fellow. A perfect treasure to me! I 've always said so!

[*Enter Vachell, meeting and stopping Todd.*

TODD. Ah, Mr. Vachell, welcome to your new home! So you 've come to take possession! I congratulate you! Of course you 'll live here for the future?

VACHELL. No, Mr. Todd.

TODD. No?

VACHELL. No.

TODD. Oh! You mean to let it?

VACHELL. No, Mr. Todd.

TODD. No?

VACHELL. No.

TODD. Ah! I see! A little investment! Going to sell it again, eh?

VACHELL. No.

[*Todd is puzzled.*

TODD (*confidently*). The estate won't be any good to cut up into building lots, you know!

VACHELL. You don't think so?

TODD. Sure it won't.

VACHELL. Thank you.

(*Todd stands there a few moments, puzzled.*)

I won't cut it up into building lots, Mr. Todd.

TODD. No — no — I would n't! (*Going off at back.*) What the deuce *has* he bought the place for?

[*Exit Todd.*

VACHELL. Mr. Chandler! You received my letter?

[*Mrs. Chandler enters.*

CHANDLER. Yes, we are quite ready to go. And I 'm

sure, Vachell, we 're exceedingly obliged to you for your kindness in allowing us to remain so long.

VACHELL. You need n't thank me. I have only acted upon my instructions.

CHANDLER. Your instructions?

VACHELL. I have not bought Tatlow Hall for myself. It belongs to a client of mine.

MRS. CHANDLER. A client?

VACHELL. It was his wish you should stay here till he could take possession himself. Yesterday I had notice from him he would be here at twelve to-day, and would require you to hand over everything to him personally.

CHANDLER. And who is the new owner of Tatlow Hall?

VACHELL. I am not at liberty to mention his name at present. (*Takes out watch.*) Excuse me; I expect him here every moment!

[*Exit Vachell.*

[*Chandler and Mrs. Chandler look at each other.*

CHANDLER. Who can have bought the place?

[*Maude enters.*

MAUDE. Sir Seton and Lady Umfraville have just driven up.

MRS. CHANDLER. It must be the Umfravilles! They 've got the money from somewhere, and bought Tatlow Hall back again!

[*Servant enters.*

SERVANT (*announcing*). Sir Seton and Lady Umfraville.

[*Enter Sir Seton and Lady Umfraville.*

MRS. CHANDLER. My dear Sir Seton! My dear Lady Umfraville!

CHANDLER. Upon my word, Sir Seton, this is really noble of you to call. It 's touching!

SIR SETON. Hum — yes — The fact is, Chandler, I ought to have come on this business before, but, as it was confoundedly disagreeable, I put it off till the last moment. But as your son is returning to-day

— you know my position — now don't you think it would be very imprudent on all sides to allow this marriage between my daughter and your son to take place — eh?

CHANDLER. I had a letter from my son this morning in which he — ah — ra — he tells me — that —

SIR SETON. That he releases Felicia. Of course, as an honourable man he could do no less. Tell him I appreciate his conduct.

MAUDE. Sir Seton, you had better know the truth from us. My brother writes that he has married abroad.

SIR SETON. Has he? I congratulate him.

LADY UMFRAVILLE. Most heartily.

MAUDE. He asks us to break the news to Felicia.

SIR SETON. We will — we will. And now it 's passed off so comfortably, there 's no harm in our mentioning that — that —

LADY UMFRAVILLE. That our dear Felicia has received an offer of marriage from young Strangeways, the banker —

[*Chandler and Mrs. Chandler exchange looks.*

SIR SETON. So there 's nothing more to be said in the matter except to congratulate Captain Chandler — and — to express our sincere sympathy in your misfortunes, our deepest sympathy.

CHANDLER. We have to thank you for allowing us to remain at Tatlow Hall.

SIR SETON. Remain at Tatlow Hall?

CHANDLER. I suppose it is Mr. Strangeways who has bought the place?

SIR SETON. Strangeways? No. Has n't Vachell, the lawyer, bought it?

CHANDLER. No. Not for himself. Only for some client, who has allowed us the use of the place and paid all the current expenses.

SIR SETON. Indeed! Who can it be?

MRS. CHANDLER. We cannot imagine.

[*Vachell enters.*

SIR SETON. Ah, Vachell! You can explain. Who's the new owner here?

CHANDLER. Yes, Vachell — who is it that has been so kind to us?

[*Cyrus enters, plainly, but well dressed.*

VACHELL. The new owner is Mr. Cyrus Blenkarn.

[*Cyrus comes down. All show great surprise.*

CHANDLER. Blenkarn! Then you —

CYRUS. I will take possession of Tatlow Hall if you are ready to give it up.

CHANDLER. Yes, I am ready. But perhaps you'll allow me —

CYRUS (*waves him off*). Give everything over to Mr. Vachell. Mr. Vachell, please take possession of this place for me.

[*Exeunt Maude and Mrs. Chandler. Chandler is about to speak, but Cyrus waves him away, and Vachell ushers him off.*

LADY UMFRAVILLE. My dear Mr. Blenkarn, I'm heartily glad we shall have you for a neighbour. You know I have always considered you a man of the greatest genius. And I adore genius!

CYRUS. Thank you, Lady Umfraville, I'm not a genius, and I don't like being adored.

SIR SETON. If there's anything I can do for you in the county, Mr. Blenkarn. — You may have some idea of going into Parliament!

CYRUS (*absorbed*). No.

LADY UMFRAVILLE. You must come and dine with us on Wednesday at the Court. We expect Lord William Vipond and the Strangeways and old Lady Devenish —

CYRUS. I'm not used to meeting such people, my lady, and I shouldn't know what to say to them. (*To Vachell.*) Mr. Vachell, Mr. Pegg will be here directly to go through everything with you.

[*Vachell goes off.*

SIR SETON. But we shall have the pleasure of seeing you at the Court some day?

CYRUS. No, Sir Seton, I've had to work all my life, and I can't begin to play now. I've done the one thing I set my heart upon. They told me I should never find out the secret, but I did it! (*Triumphantly.*) I did it! And now it's done, I don't know what to do with the rest of my life! I begin to wish I'd got all the ground to go over again!

SIR SETON. Come and see us sometimes. We'd do our best to make you feel at home.

CYRUS. No, Sir Seton, let me be! Let me be! My life's done! But if you want to be kind to me, I have a daughter — (*recollecting*) I had two — and it was in this room (*giving way*) the day before she left me — [*He breaks down utterly, and hides his face in his hands.*

[*Sir Seton watches him for a moment, then beckons to Lady Umfraville and very quietly and unobtrusively takes her off. Pause.*

CYRUS. I can't stop here! I can't stop here!

[*Exit Cyrus.*

[*Enter Jesse Pegg, in high top hat and frock coat.*

JESSE (*speaking off in a very brisk, business-like, but not unkind tone*). Come, come, Mrs. Pegg. You're late again! Always late! Come, come! Are you coming, or are you not?

[*Nancy enters.*

NANCY (*meekly*). I'm very sorry, Jesse! I could n't help it!

JESSE (*takes out watch*). Ten minutes this morning! Three minutes yesterday! Seven minutes at the concert on Monday! Twenty minutes you've wasted for me this week! It's a little too bad!

[*Shaking his head severely, but not unkindly.*

NANCY. Ten minutes this morning looking after your son and heir — three minutes yesterday ordering your din-

ner — seven minutes on Monday making myself handsome enough to be seen with you.

JESSE. Handsome is that handsome does, and the wife who wastes her husband's time can have very little memory of all she promised him at the altar.

NANCY. Do you forget what you promised me before we went to the altar?

JESSE. I have no recollection, my dear, of having promised you anything in particular.

NANCY. Oh, Jesse! You promised me everything! Everything!

JESSE. Did I? I don't remember being so foolish!

NANCY. It 's very seldom, dear, that I keep you waiting.

JESSE. Once a year, my darling, is once too often.

NANCY. You know, Jesse, I 'm always studying you. I 'm thinking all day long how I can make you happy!

JESSE. Quite right, my dear, and you do make me happy.

NANCY. Then give me a kiss and say you forgive me.

JESSE (*kisses her in a very business-like way*). There! There! I forgive you, but don't do it again. I wonder where your father is?

NANCY. To think that he should have bought Tatlow Hall! Oh, if Mary were only alive to know it!

JESSE. Poor Mary! It 's strange your father has n't been able to find out any particulars of her death!

NANCY. No — if she sailed in that ship, it must have been in another name.

JESSE. I wish we had followed the track of that young widow-lady.

NANCY. The one whose baby died —

JESSE. Yes. It would have been a natural thing under the circumstances for Mary —

NANCY (*looking off*). Here 's Mr. Chandler coming! Don't let 's see him, poor man! It will seem as if we wanted to triumph over him.

[*Servant enters.*

SERVANT. A letter for Mrs. Pegg, very important. It

has been sent on from your own house, ma'am.

NANCY. Thank you!

(*Reads letter, shows great surprise and joy. Chandler has entered from conservatory. Nancy with great delight*). Jesse! Read that! Read that!

CHANDLER (*humbly, holding out his hand*). Good-morning, Mrs. Pegg.

NANCY (*while Jesse has read letter*). Good-morning, Mr. Chandler. We can't stay, Mr. Chandler.

(*She snatches hold of Jesse's arm, and hurries him off at window, letter in hand, bewildered.*)

Come along, Jesse! Quick! Quick!

[*Cyrus enters.*

CHANDLER. Can't stay! They're afraid I want to borrow money of 'em, I suppose. It's a blackguard world to live in!—Mr. Blenkarn! Could I speak to you for a moment?

CYRUS. Well?

CHANDLER. I wanted to say that I behaved very badly to you in the past. I ought to have paid you better for your invention. I ought to have taken you into partnership. I hope you will allow me to say I'm very sorry.

CYRUS. You have said it.

CHANDLER. It was strange that I should build the new works for you to occupy!

CYRUS. Very strange.

CHANDLER. Todd tells me in a few years they'll hardly be large enough.

CYRUS. I daresay.

CHANDLER. I thought perhaps you might have a vacancy in some small way where I could be useful to you —some very small way—I'm not particular.

CYRUS. I don't know of any, Mr. Chandler.

CHANDLER. It's hard to come down in the world after having been up in it all your life.

CYRUS. It's hard to be kept down in it all your life

without having a chance to get up.

CHANDLER. You'll find me a corner — you'll forget the past and give me a chance?

CYRUS. I've nothing for you, Mr. Chandler.

CHANDLER. But in so large a concern, for an old friend.

CYRUS. What!

CHANDLER. I may call myself a friend.

CYRUS. No, I think not. You might have been my friend once — you remember —

CHANDLER. I remember. I'm sorry I troubled you, but in a few days I may not be able to get even a meal. You would n't wish me to starve —

CYRUS (*taking out note-case*). No, I would n't wish you to starve. (*Giving note.*) That will provide for you for the time.

CHANDLER (*effusively*). Thank you! Thank you, Blenkarn! I'm very grateful, most grateful, I assure you! And if any little situation should turn up —

CYRUS. No, no.

CHANDLER. I know I don't deserve it, Blenkarn, but there's one who would ask you to forgive me if she were alive. Your daughter Mary —

CYRUS. Stop! Don't you mention her name. Don't *you* remind me of her.

(*Exit Chandler.*)

There's one who would ask you to forgive me if she were alive. Your daughter Mary. Oh, my dear, if I could call you back to me, if I could hold you once to my heart! Mary! Mary! If you were alive, dear, this would be your home! Can't you hear me, dear? (*Pause.*) This beautiful home is all yours! I've bought it for you! And you will never come to it! Not all the money in the world will buy you back to me for one short hour! What shall I do to your enemies, my dear? They're in my hands! Their very bread is mine to give or to refuse them! I can punish them! I can humble them to the dust! Shall I strike them

down, dear, or shall I have mercy? If you were here to guide me, what would you tell me to do? Would you forgive them, dear? I've got my revenge, but it does n't satisfy me. I don't want them to suffer! I want to forgive them! Tell me, Mary! You were always kind and gentle! Yes, you would forgive them, and I'll forgive them too! That shall be my revenge! (*Calls off.*) Mr. Chandler! Mr. Chandler!

[*Chandler, Maude, and Mrs. Chandler appear in conservatory. They all enter.*

CYRUS. Mr. Chandler! You will be my under-manager at the works at a salary of four hundred pounds a year! And you can live in the house that is vacant there!

CHANDLER. It's too good of you, Mr. Blenkarn! I don't deserve it! But I thank you with all my heart.

CYRUS. Don't thank me! Thank the memory of my poor, wronged girl, who begged forgiveness for you!

MAUDE. You will accept my thanks, Mr. Blenkarn?

CYRUS. Yes, my dear, for you were always kind to us. Nancy has told me!

[*Noise of shouting and music outside, growing nearer.*

CYRUS. What's the meaning of those shouts?

[*Todd enters hastily at window.*

TODD. My dear Mr. Blenkarn, I congratulate you most heartily! (*Warmly to Cyrus.*) Delighted to find you are the owner of Tatlow Hall! But Captain Chandler is making a mistake—

CYRUS. Captain Chandler?

TODD. Yes. Did n't you know he is returning from Africa to-day?

CYRUS. No. And he's coming here?

TODD. Yes, of course. They've given him a demonstration for his bravery, and they're bringing him here to his father's house, as he thinks.

CYRUS (*to Chandler*). Did you know of this?

CHANDLER. I knew he was returning to Tatlow, but it is not by my wish he comes here.

TODD. And it seems he's bringing his wife with him.

CYRUS. His wife?

TODD. Somebody he's married abroad. (*Looking off.*) They're coming into the house! I'd better go and stop them, shall I?

CYRUS. No, let them come, let them come, let them come. (*To Chandler.*) What did you let him come here for if you wanted me to forgive you? Do you think I can bury the past now? No, I can't do it. I can't shelter and feed those who robbed me of her, and drove her away from me to die in a strange land. I can't do it, I have tried, but it's beyond me.

[*Band and music nearer, shouts outside. Julian rushes hurriedly in by window as if to escape crowd.*

JULIAN. I've got rid of them at last! And here I am at home! Home! (*Meeting Cyrus.*) Mr. Blenkarn!

CYRUS (*seizing him*). My child! You robbed me of my child! My Mary! Answer to me for her! My girl! Give her to me! Do you hear! My child!

JULIAN (*disengaging himself*). Forgive me, Mr. Blenkarn! Then you never got our letters explaining?

CYRUS. Letters? No. Explaining what?

JULIAN. I suppose we've got here before them. I wrote you explaining I'd done my best to right things.

CYRUS. How? By bringing your wife here — here to the very place where —? Well, let her come and know the truth about you from me.

(*Julian goes up to window.*)

Your wife! Bring her to me! I want to see her.

JULIAN. You shall see her!

(*Music outside continued. Mary, Jesse, and Nancy enter.* You shall see her! (*Presenting Mary.*) My wife!

MARY (*holding out her arms*). Father!

[*Cyrus cannot believe his eyes, looks at her for a few minutes, then snatches her into his arms and cries like a child.*

CURTAIN

JUDAH

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I. Tapestry-room at Asgarby Castle. (*Eighteen days pass.*)

Act II. The Terrace and Old Norman Keep, Asgarby Castle. (*One year passes.*)

Act III. Tapestry-room at Asgarby Castle.

The whole of the action takes place at Asgarby Castle, near the city of Beachampton, in the present day.

"Judah" was first produced at the Shaftesbury Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, London, under the management of E. S. Willard and John Hart on May 21, 1890.

Original Cast

Judah Llewellyn	Mr. E. S. Willard
The Earl of Asgarby	Mr. C. Fulton
Professor Jopp, F. R. S., etc.	Mr. Sant Matthews
Mr. Prall	Mr. H. Cane
Juxon Prall	Mr. F. Kerr
Mr. Dethic	Mr. Royce Carleton
Mr. Papworthy, Mayor of Beachampton	Mr. E. W. Thomas
Roper	Mr. H. Harting
Lady Eve, Lord Asgarby's daughter	Miss Bessie Hatton
Sophie Jopp	Miss Gertrude Warden
Mrs. Prall	Miss A. Bowering
Vashti Dethic	Miss Olga Brandon

JUDAH

ACT I

SCENE. *The Tapestry-room at Asgarby Castle. A handsome apartment hung with copies of Raphael's cartoons in tapestry. The back is covered with a copy in tapestry of the cartoon of the healing of the paralytic at the gate of the Temple. Door up stage, right. Fireplace down stage, right. Windows opening upon garden up stage, left.*

Discover Lord Asgarby — a very distinguished-looking man about sixty. He is writing at table.

[*Enter Roper, announcing.*

ROPER. Mr. Papworthy!

[*Enter Papworthy. Exit Roper.*

[*Lord Asgarby rises.*

PAPWORTHY. Excuse my taking the liberty, Lord Asgarby, but you being the chief pillar of Beachampton, I thought it my duty to ask your opinion upon the question of our Mr. Llewellyn and this young person.

[*Enter Professor Jopp at window. A man about sixty, keen, alert, intellectual; bald, very high forehead, bright deep-set eyes, genial Voltaire type of face.*

JOPP. Am I in the way?

LORD ASGARBY. Not at all, Jopp. (*Introduces.*) Mr. Papworthy. He wants to ask my advice about this young lady who is causing all this sensation in the city.

JOPP. This Miss Dethic?

PAPWORTHY. Yes, sir. I have been connected with the Durfield Road Chapel since I was a boy, and it seems to me that our young minister Mr. Llewellyn, is going

too far when he declares in public his belief in the miracles that this Miss Dethic is said to work.

JOPP. You don't believe in miracles, Mr. Papworthy?

PAPWORTHY. Not in England in the nineteenth century. Do you, sir?

JOPP. No. I never believe in miracles that do not happen either in a remote century or a remote country.

PAPWORTHY. Quite so, sir; and though of course I don't say they are impossible in Beachampton to-day, yet I think, as mayor and as head of one of the oldest establishments in the city, it is my duty to — to — ah — to —

JOPP. To discourage them as much as possible, eh?

PAPWORTHY. Yes. And Lord Asgarby subscribing very largely to our cause, as he does to everything in Beachampton, I called to ask him whether in his opinion Mr. Llewellyn ought not to be removed.

JOPP. What for? He is tremendously in earnest — the finest natural orator I ever listened to.

PAPWORTHY. You have heard him, sir?

LORD ASGARBY. We all went last night. My daughter was deeply impressed, and wished to meet him.

PAPWORTHY. He's in Asgarby now, with Miss Dethic.

LORD ASGARBY. In the village? Could you bring him here?

PAPWORTHY. Certainly, my lord.

(*Lord Asgarby rings bell.*)

I don't deny Mr. Llewellyn's extraordinary gifts, but it's a pity he's so infatuated with this girl. There are other members of the congregation — my own daughter, for instance — she did knit him a pair of slippers. However, there's no denying the wonderful power he has over the people.

JOPP. He seems to have received a good education.

PAPWORTHY. He was at our training-college for some years. All our ministers are trained there. But it isn't education with Mr. Llewellyn — it's born in him!

JOPP. Welsh, isn't he?

PAPWORTHY. A Welsh father and Jewish mother.

JOPP. Celt and Jew! Two good races! Just the man to give England a new religion, or make her believe in her old one.

[*Roper enters.*

PAPWORTHY. I will try and find him, my lord.

LORD ASGARBY. Thank you. By the way, you needn't trouble the rate-payers about the Free Library for the city. I will bear the entire cost myself.

PAPWORTHY. My lord, you are too generous!

LORD ASGARBY. Generous! What is the use of money to me?

[*Lady Eve enters — a girl of fifteen, with beautiful, hectic complexion, feverish, fidgety, with sudden alternate fits of languor and restless energy. Papworthy bows very respectfully to her, and she comes to Lord Asgarby. He kisses her forehead.*

PAPWORTHY (*aside*). Fifty thousand a year, and one dying child!

[*Exit. Roper shows him off.*

[*Lord Asgarby watches Lady Eve constantly, with the greatest tenderness and solicitude.*

JOPP. Well, Lady Eve, how are you to-day?

LADY EVE. I am quite well. The doctors are all wrong. I mean to cheat them all and live.

[*Flings herself into an arm-chair, her fingers playing restlessly with a tassel.*

LORD ASGARBY. Live, dearest? The doctors have never said otherwise.

LADY EVE. No, but they think it. You needn't try to deceive me. I know what these journeys mean, from Torquay to Nice, from Nice to Algiers.

(*She rises suddenly, goes to Jopp determinedly. Lord Asgarby follows her, always with the greatest solicitude.*)

Professor Jopp, I read your article in this month's

Modern Review, on "The Scientific Conception of Truth."

JOPP. You read a great deal too much, Lady Eve.

LADY EVE. I read everything. (*Very pointedly.*) Do you always tell the truth yourself?

JOPP (*a little taken aback; after a short pause*). Almost invariably.

LADY EVE. Will you tell me the truth now?

JOPP. Certainly.

LADY EVE. How long shall I live?

JOPP. Well, I'm not in practice now, you know.

LADY EVE (*goes from him, pettishly, to chair at fireplace, and sits*). Ah! you all think I am afraid to die! My uncle Jack dashed among the powder barrels at Inkerman, though he knew it was certain death. I am no more a coward than he was. I can die!

LORD ASGARBY (*going to her*). But you said you were going to live.

LADY EVE. So I am, if you'll let me have my own way? (*With great eagerness.*) Will you?

LORD ASGARBY. My dearest, if there is anything in this world that money can buy, or love can procure, you know it is yours. (*Tenderly.*) What is it?

LADY EVE. Professor Jopp will laugh.

JOPP (*seriously and tenderly*). I could n't laugh at anything that promised to bring health to you.

LADY EVE. You laughed the other day.

JOPP. At what?

LADY EVE. At this Vashti Dethic. Yet she has made hundreds of cures in Spain.

JOPP. In Spain.

LADY EVE. And in America.

JOPP. In America.

LADY EVE. And in England. Mr. Prall has written a book all about her cures and her fasting. (*Very confidently.*) I'm sure she could cure me. Father, you won't be angry! Miss Dethic is staying at the Towers

with Mrs. Prall, and I've written and asked them to come this afternoon.

LORD ASGARBY. That's right.

LADY EVE. And may I ask her to stay here?

LORD ASGARBY. Certainly, dear, if you wish. (*Jopp shrugs his shoulders.*) She is in the village with this Mr. Llewellyn.

LADY EVE. Mr. Llewellyn — the minister we heard last night. I'll go and see if I can find her. (*Goes to window. Lord Asgarby follows her.*) No, don't come. Oh! If I could speak like him! If I could do something! It's action I want. This world is all for the strong. To do something, and then to die. (*In a very dreamy, musing tone.*) How sweet Death seems sometimes! Like a kiss from an unknown lover! He comes and touches you and says, "Don't you know me? I have loved you all these years. This is our wedding-day. You must come with me. You must come." [*Exit Lady Eve at window.*

LORD ASGARBY (*has watched her with great pain. Comes down, sits at writing-table, head in hands, then bursts into tears.*) I can't bear it. My dear one! My only one! The last of us! The end of our race! To have our name written in every page of our country's history, and now to be blotted out. I have followed six of them to the grave, one after another, and now this last one is to be taken. I could buy up half the county, Jopp, and I can't buy a year's life for my only child. I'm worth nearly sixty thousand a year, and I'm poorer than the poorest labourer that can give blood and vigour to his race.

JOPP. My poor Asgarby!

LORD ASGARBY. You have changed your beliefs since we were at Oxford together. I haven't! What comfort can your no-creed give me? Is it just?

JOPP. Yes. Your family has played a great part all through English history. It has lived its life, a long

and honoured one. My dear Asgarby, when the day's work is done, and well done, why rebel because the night has come and the labourer must go home to his rest?

LORD ASGARBY. But she has n't lived her day. Must it be, Jopp? I don't trust these doctors. They only tell me what they know I am longing to hear. Tell me the truth.

JOPP. With the greatest care, Lady Eve may live some years.

LORD ASGARBY. How many?

JOPP. It is possible she may outlive you and me, but—

LORD ASGARBY. But?—

JOPP. You must n't build on it.

[*The two men stand with hands clasped for some moments. Sophie Jopp's voice heard off at window.*

SOPHIE (*off*). Decidedly—put the girl to a scientific test.

[*Enter Sophie Jopp at window, in outdoor dress; a dogmatic, supercilious, incisive young lady, with eyeglass and short hair. She speaks in a metallic, confident voice; a girl who could never blush. Goes to chair; sits down.*

[*Enter at window Juxon Prall, a thin, wizened, old young man, spectacles, sharp features; knows everything—a young man of the most complete self-assurance. He has a peculiar finicking trick of speaking with the tips of the fingers of one hand playing on the tips of the other. Holds his head upon one side, as if he had n't muscular strength enough to hold it upright.*

JUXON. How do you do, Asgarby? How do you do, Jopp? We 've been watching this wonder-worker, Miss Dethic, go through her performance.

LORD ASGARBY. You don't share your father's belief in her?

JUXON. My dear Lord Asgarby!

[*Shrugs his shoulders.*

LORD ASGARBY. But Mr. Prall gives scores of authenticated cases in his book.

JUXON (*with the loftiest contempt*). My father's book! You've read *that?*

LORD ASGARBY. With the greatest interest. Why not?

JUXON. Well, naturally, I would not deprive my poor father of any small intellectual status that his various lucubrations have left him, but to *me* his book is simply the most deplorable farrago of unsound logic, sickly sentiment, and blatant ignorance that I have ever read. Eh, Miss Jopp?

SOPHIE. The style is certainly flabby.

JUXON. Atrocious. Do you feel inclined to investigate this Miss Dethic's powers, Jopp?

JOPP (*shakes his head*). I have investigated too many of them. The exact point at which self-deception ends and the deception of other people begins has ceased to interest me. I made up my mind when I exposed those rascally spiritualists last year, that I would n't waste any more time over such nonsense.

SOPHIE. Oh! but this case does really present some very astonishing features.

JUXON. Quite out of the common. I have proposed a scientific test.

LORD ASGARBY. Ah! What?

JUXON. Miss Dethic only performs these wonderful cures after some weeks' fasting. She is locked in a room and remains in a kind of trance. To test if the fast is real, I have proposed that the key of the room should be handed over to me.

SOPHIE. Would it not be better, Mr. Prall, that you and I should take watches of equal duration?

JUXON. I don't think so. I don't question your good faith; but the experience of my entire life has convinced me that my own personal observation is the only instrument whose results are perfectly satisfying and convincing.

LORD ASGARBY. And did Miss Dethic refuse?

JUXON. My mother objected on the score of propriety. I am extremely desirous not to say anything unfilial, but to *me* my poor mother presents the most alarming spectacle of all that is insufferable and prudish in the British matron. It is simply deplorable.

[*Enter Roper, announcing Mr. and Mrs. Prall. During the following scene Juxon gazes at his father and mother with an air of benevolent pity, and occasionally exchanges glances and shrugs of the shoulder with Sophie, who reciprocates his feelings.*

[*Enter Mr. and Mrs. Prall — Mr. Prall is carrying crutches.*

MRS. PRALL. Lord Asgarby, congratulate us. (*Shaking hands with Lord Asgarby.*) The most marvellous manifestations!

MR. PRALL. How do you do, Asgarby? (*Shakes hands.*) To-day's results must silence the most obdurate.

JUXON. They will not silence me.

MR. PRALL (*looks at Juxon angrily; says nothing; turns to Lord Asgarby*). You remember old Benjamin Bandy?

LORD ASGARBY. The lame man at the cross-roads?

MR. PRALL. Yes. For the last twenty years he has done nothing but hobble round his garden on crutches.

MRS. PRALL. And swear horribly. And, as he had a remarkably powerful voice, all his neighbours for half a mile round were compelled to listen to him.

JUXON. Not necessarily.

MR. PRALL (*to Juxon, very loudly and angrily*). It was impossible to avoid hearing him.

LORD ASGARBY. What about Benjamin Bandy?

MR. PRALL. Miss Dethic has cured him.

JOPP. Of his bad language?

MRS PRALL. No, of his complications. He had various disorders.

MR. PRALL. He can walk, Lord Asgarby, as well as you

and I. These are his crutches.

[*Showing them to Jopp.*

MRS. PRALL (*to Jopp*). You can't deny the crutches.

JOPP (*examines the crutches very carefully through his glasses; turns them round upside down, assuming an air of conducting a profound examination, and then delivers his verdict very magisterially*). They *are* crutches.

[*Prall, with a satisfied air, crosses to table and puts crutches on it.*

MRS. PRALL. And what have you to say to that?

JOPP. That apparently Miss Dethic has set free an alarming quantity of bad language to perambulate the country, instead of confining it within the limited radius of half a mile of the cross-roads.

[*Enter Roper, announcing Mr. Papworthy and Mr. Llewellyn. Enter Papworthy. Enter Judah Llewellyn, about twenty-five, dark complexion, shaggy, clustering hair in thick curls over his forehead. Quick, nervous step; glowing, enthusiastic manner. Slight Welsh accent which becomes more noticeable in excitement.*

PAPWORTHY. My lord, this is Mr. Llewellyn. If you 'll excuse me, my lord — (*taking out watch*) — I have a meeting.

[*Exit Papworthy.*

JUDAH (*bows very slightly*). You sent for me.

LORD ASGARBY. We had the pleasure of hearing you last evening. We were delighted.

JOPP. I have to speak in public occasionally. I should like to know the secret of your oratory.

JUDAH. I believe what I say.

JOPP. *I* believe what *I* say. There must be some other reason.

JUDAH. What do you speak about?

JOPP. My last lecture was on tadpoles and lizards.

JUDAH. Mine was on the unseen world.

JOPP (*dryly*). Ah! there I can't follow you.

JUDAH. It does need wings.

JOPP. And I have only legs. Was that a personal experience of your own that you told us of last night? Those mysterious voices —

JUDAH. Yes; I hear them almost every day. I have heard them ever since I was a child and kept my father's sheep on the hills in Wales. You know I lived almost alone until I was nearly twenty. I saw no human being, sometimes spoke to no one, from one week to another.

JOPP. And you fancy that you hear a real voice at these times?

JUDAH. It is n't fancy — I hear it as plainly as I hear yours. (*Jopp smiles.*) Why do you doubt me? Is the spirit-world so far from you that you don't believe in it? It 's nearer to me than this earth I walk upon.

LORD ASGARBY. I understood that this Miss Vashti Dethic was with you, Mr. Llewellyn.

[*At the mention of her name Judah's face shows intense interest.*

JUDAH. I left her in the village.

MRS. PRALL. I was bringing her here, but she would insist on trying her marvellous curative power on some poor people in the village.

MR. PRALL. Wonderful! I am just bringing out a new edition of my book on her cures — the seventeenth!

JUXON. Perhaps, sir, you will correct a few of the gross inaccuracies that appear in the previous editions.

MR. PRALL (*terribly upset, with an outburst of impotent wrath*). Juxon! (*Suddenly recovers himself. Speaks in a tone of condescending sarcasm.*) I decline to argue with you, sir.

JUXON (*imperturbably*). My dear father, I would not force you to such an unequal contest.

[*Enter Roper, announcing Mr. Dethic. Enter Mr. Dethic, a suave, furtive, sallow, oily man of about fifty,*

with a touch of the manner of a second-rate platform orator.

MR. PRALL. Lord Asgarby, may I present Mr. Dethic, the father of our distinguished guest?

LORD ASGARBY. We are pleased to see you, Mr. Dethic.

DETHIC. I hope you 'll excuse my intruding, my lord, but my poor child —

JUDAH. Miss Dethic is not ill?

DETHIC. Merely exhausted. She is resting in the grounds for a few moments.

MRS. PRALL. And the young girl with the fits?

DETHIC. Perfectly cured, and so grateful. Wanted to give us a testimonial on the spot.

MR. PRALL. What do you say to these occurrences, Professor?

JOPP. I haven't witnessed them.

MR. PRALL. You don't deny them?

JOPP. We don't deny miracles nowadays, Mr. Prall — we explain them.

JUDAH. Explain! — what?

JOPP. The perfectly natural means by which miracles are always accomplished.

JUDAH. You know the secrets of life and death, then? You hold the keys of the grave? Explain? Explain to the mother the mystery of the love that gives a living child to her arms! Explain to the husband what hand snatches back his wife from the gates of death! Explain? They do not need it. They hold their dear ones to their hearts — safe. They do not question — they love.

LORD ASGARBY (*who has listened eagerly*). We hoped Miss Dethic would have been here.

JUDAH. Will you let me bring her to you?

LORD ASGARBY. If you will be so kind.

JUDAH. I will fetch her.

[*Exit Judah at door.*

DETHIC (*comes up to Lord Asgarby, his manner oily, un-*

easy, underbred). My lord, may I express my overwhelming sense of the honour you have done me to welcome me under the hospitable roof of Asgarby Castle?

LORD ASGARBY. We hear wonderful accounts of Miss Dethic's powers.

DETHIC. Not half the truth, my lord.

JOPP. So I should imagine!

DETHIC (*turns sharply round on Jopp*). Sir!

JOPP. In placing the proportion of truth to rumour at one half, you have formed an unusually favourable estimate of human nature, Mr. Dethic.

DETHIC (*confused; laughs slightly*). Oh — ah! Yes! Possibly, sir, you have never met with any one possessing these extraordinary powers.

JOPP (*in the gravest, most matter-of-fact tone, looks Dethic full in the face, and speaks without showing the least irony*). Never, Mr. Dethic. I have in my little collection at home the liver-wing of a phœnix, the entire skeleton of a griffin in excellent preservation, and the only known specimen of the horn of a unicorn, but I have never met with any one possessed of supernatural powers.

DETHIC. Indeed!

[*Laughs; rather confused.*

[*Roper enters suddenly.*

ROPER. I beg pardon, my lord. The young lady has fainted.

[*Mrs. Prall, Lord Asgarby, and Mr. Prall go off, followed by Roper. Jopp stands at fire-place.*

DETHIC (*to Juxon, who ignores him*). My poor darling! It 's ever the same when she is labouring for the good of others.

[*Re-enter Judah, bearing Vashti, in a swoon. Vashti has a very pale, saintly, beautiful face. He carries her with the utmost tenderness, and shows great concern. He is followed into the room by Lord Asgarby and the Pralls.*

JUDAH (*brings her down stage*). She is ill! She is dying! (*To Dethic.*) You shall not let her waste her strength any more. She is killing herself. (*Places her on settee.*) Miss Dethic!

JOPP. I have some medical knowledge. Can I be of any use?

DETHIC (*intercepts Jopp*). Not at all. Pardon me; she prefers to be left alone.

(*Jopp turns away.*)

My lord, will you be so kind as to leave her with me?

LORD ASGARBY. By all means. You are sure there is no danger?

DETHIC. Nothing serious; it will soon pass off.

[*Sophie and Mrs. Prall go off at window. Prall has been taking notes in a pocketbook.*

MR. PRALL. A few notes for my next edition.

JUXON. I must really beg you to correct those inaccuracies, sir.

[*Exeunt Juxon and Prall. Lord Asgarby beckons Jopp and goes off at window.*

JOPP (*to himself, as he crosses*). Father — genus, cheat; species, religious; variety, bogus-miracle business. Daughter — hum!

[*Exit Jopp. Vashti opens her eyes.*

JUDAH (*looking at her*). You are better?

VASHTI. Yes. How good you are to me!

JUDAH. You are trembling still — you can hardly breathe.

DETHIC. Mr. Llewellyn, my poor child will recover more quickly if she is left alone with me.

JUDAH. It is my fault. I have encouraged her to use these powers, and now her strength is failing.

VASHTI. No, I am better; leave me for a few moments.

[*Judah gives her a look, then exit at window after the others. They watch him off.*

DETHIC. Splendid, my darling. I'm proud of you. By Jove, we're in clover at last! The old fellow here is

worth goodness knows how much a year, and throws it about as if it was pebbles, and the young lady that wrote to Mr. Prall is his only child. All the others have died, and he 's ready to give his head to keep her alive. Now, my dear, do play your cards well, and our fortunes are made for life.

VASHTI. I 'll go no further.

DETHIC. What?

VASHTI. I 'm tired of it. I hate this deception. I 'll have no more of it.

DETHIC. Hush now! Take care, my angel girl, take care! You surely won't refuse to cure the poor young lady?

VASHTI. Cure her?

DETHIC. Yes, darling. You do cure people, you know.

VASHTI. They get well — sometimes.

DETHIC. My darling, what more can any doctor in the country say of his patients?

VASHTI. It 's only the ignorant and uneducated who believe in me. They think I have some mysterious power.

DETHIC. So you have. Take my word for it, my darling, there 's some sort of magnetic influence about you that you don't quite understand yourself.

VASHTI. Sometimes I think there is, but then again I doubt myself. You 're sure I have this power — it is *I* who cure them?

DETHIC. Quite sure, my darling. You could n't have been successful in so many scores of cases if there had n't been something in it.

VASHTI. Then let us trust to that alone, and give up this pretence of fasting.

DETHIC. You can't, my dear. We 've always given out that the fasting is the secret of your power, and people look for it. The general public are such fools. They 'll never let you do 'em good in a plain, honest, straightforward way. You 're bound to deceive 'em for their own good. We must throw 'em the fasting in. Mr.

Prall has written a book about it, and laid special stress upon it.

VASHTI. Mr. Prall is deceiving himself and his readers.

DETHIC. Just so, my dear. Mr. Prall is a fool — that's the reason he's been of such use to us. And his readers are fools — that's the reason his book has had so many editions. It's ungrateful to repine at Providence for having made the world so full of fools, when it's quite plain they are put here for our especial benefit.

VASHTI. If I should be found out, who would be the fool then?

DETHIC. Found out?! Nonsense!

VASHTI. You might not be able to supply me with food.

DETHIC. My precious angel, you trust to your old father. I did n't spend twenty years in the conjuring business without keeping a trick or two up my sleeve in case of accident.

VASHTI. I will not do it. It's shameful! It's wicked! I would never have begun it if I had known it would come to this; but you led me on step by step, and now I hate myself. Oh! what am I? — what am I? (*With bitter self-reproach; then turns suddenly round on him.*) Make some excuse to these people. I will not stay to trick and lie to them.

DETHIC (*intercepting her and catching her hands, looking straight in her eyes*). Oh yes, you will, my dear!

VASHTI (*very firm*). I will not.

DETHIC. Oh, yes, you will. (*Vashti turns from him; he drops her hands.*) What's the reason of this change, Vashti? There's some reason for it. What is it?

VASHTI (*after a pause*). The people believe in me.

DETHIC. Well, don't you want them to believe in you?

VASHTI (*softly*). Mr. Llewellyn believes in me.

DETHIC. Mr. Llewellyn? Oh-h-h! It's Mr. Llewellyn, is it?

VASHTI (*very determinedly*). I will not do it.

DETHIC (*venomous and quiet*). Look here, my girl.

Either you stay on here, and act according to my instructions, and are rewarded with a happy and honoured competence for the rest of your life, or you confess yourself a fraud, disgrace your trusting old father, and let Mr. Llewellyn know exactly what you are, besides getting yourself lodgings inside Beachampton jail.

VASHTI (*frightened*). Jail!

DETHIC. The palatial red-brick edifice overlooking the canal.

VASHTI (*very frightened*). I have done nothing criminal, have I?

DETHIC. Haven't you? How about imposing on dear, kind, good Mr. and Mrs. Prall, and living on 'em, and obtaining money of 'em on false pretences?

VASHTI. Obtaining money?

DETHIC. I've borrowed a hundred pounds of Mr. Prall.

(*Vashti shows alarm.*)

Oh, you've had your share. Everything you've got on came out of it.

VASHTI (*deeply ashamed*). You told me he gave it to you.

DETHIC. So he did, so far as there's any chance of his getting it back. But up to the present he regards the transaction as a loan.

(*Vashti is overcome with shame.*)

Come, Vashti, don't be a fool. You can't go back, now.

(*Judah enters at window.*)

I was just trying to persuade her, Mr. Llewellyn, that it is her duty to stay here and cure this poor young lady if she can. I was asking her to remember what you said: "Squander your life to save it; save it, and find that you have lost it after all." (*Turns to Vashti.*) You will stay here, Vashti, won't you? You'll stay?

[*Looks threateningly.*

VASHTI (*after a pause*). Yes, I'll stay.

DETHIC. That's right, my dear. I'll go and tell his lordship.

[*Goes to window, and exit.*

JUDAH (*very much embarrassed*). Miss Dethic.

VASHTI. Yes? (*Looking at him.*) What is it, Mr. Llewellyn?

JUDAH. I want to speak to you.

VASHTI (*after a pause*). Why don't you speak?

JUDAH. Because — I can't.

VASHTI. You can be eloquent enough when you choose.

JUDAH. I am afraid to speak to you. Your goodness, your purity, take my breath away.

[*Vashti shows a stab of pain at deceiving him; then shows pleasure at his confession of admiration. Her face glows as he proceeds.*

JUDAH (*looking at her with the deepest reverence; approaching her*). You are like the picture of the angel that my mother hung over my head when I was a child. I can't speak to you as I do to others. (*Breathless.*) I want to kneel and worship you.

VASHTI. How can you speak so? You do not know me. You are mistaken in me. Oh, why do you think so well of me! Can't you see that I have a thousand faults? Indeed, indeed, I am no better than other women.

JUDAH. It is your goodness makes you say that.

VASHTI. I am not good.

JUDAH. How is it, then, that you have this strange power over evil? What is it but your goodness that frightens disease from its hold? See what you have done to-day? But you fly from your own good deeds. You will not hear the blessings of those whom you have healed and comforted. I hear them. I treasure them. I know what they cost you. It is your own life and health you give to others. This afternoon you fainted. I want to ask you to spare yourself, to waste your strength no more.

VASHTI. I am better now — quite well. You would wish me to stay here and try to do this young lady good?

JUDAH. I would not have you injure your own health.

VASHTI. But if I promised you that this should be the last time, — that, succeed or fail, I will try no more, — would you not have me do it then?

JUDAH. Yes, I would.

VASHTI. Then I will do this, and for your sake it shall be for the last time.

JUDAH. Thank you.

VASHTI. But oh! Mr. Llewellyn, you must not think so well of me. You don't know me. I am not an angel, I am a *woman.*

[*Enter Dethic at window.*

DETHIC (*oily, balmy*). Quite recovered, my precious? (*Vashti shows intense disgust at her father's tone.*) That's right. (*Calls off.*) My lord, my poor child is now perfectly restored.

[*Enter Lord Asgarby and Lady Eve.*

LADY EVE (*excitedly, speaking as she enters*). Where is she? Introduce me! Never mind, I'll introduce myself. (*Going to Vashti, taking her hands.*) You are Vashti Dethic? I have heard so much of you. Is it true you have this wonderful power?

[*Enter Jopp at window. He pauses, and looks at Dethic.*

VASHTI. I think I have been the means of restoring some people to health.

LADY EVE. Can you cure me?

VASHTI. Will you let me try?

LADY EVE. Yes. There is something in the touch of your hand. I feel you have done me good already. You must stay with us now.

VASHTI. If Mrs. Prall can spare me.

LADY EVE. She must! (*Turns to Lord Asgarby.*) Then that's settled, is n't it?

LORD ASGARBY. I shall be only too pleased — if convenient to Miss Dethic.

DETHIC. Quite, my lord. Quite, I assure you.

[*He shows great satisfaction.*

LADY EVE. I will go and tell Mrs. Prall we are going to rob her of you. I shall soon be well now.

LORD ASGARBY (*kisses her; shows great affection*). My dearest!

LADY EVE (*to Lord Asgarby*). Does n't she look like a saint? Perhaps she is one.

LORD ASGARBY. If she cures you, she is.

[*Exit Lady Eve at window.*

DETHIC (*after a little humming and hawing*). My lord, do I understand that I am included in your lordship's kind invitation to Asgarby Castle?

LORD ASGARBY. Certainly, Mr. Dethic.

DETHIC. Thank you, my lord. My dear child will lay down her life for Lady Eve, if necessary.

JOPP. How can that be necessary?

DETHIC. Well, you see, she is quite unable to perform these great cures without fasting for weeks, and she is like a dead creature afterwards.

JUDAH (*very emphatically to Vashti*). You shall not do it.

DETHIC. Of course we don't expect any reward. Still, if any trifling way of showing your gratitude should suggest itself —

[*Vashti rises as if to stop Dethic.*

LORD ASGARBY. If your daughter is the means of benefiting Lady Eve, there is nothing you can ask me that I will not readily give you.

VASHTI (*emphatically*). I will take nothing.

LORD ASGARBY. I shall insist on making some return. There is surely something that you wish for?

VASHTI. No, nothing. (*Glancing at Judah.*) Yes, there is something.

LORD ASGARBY. What is it?

VASHTI. May I mention it to you alone?

LORD ASGARBY. Certainly.

[*Takes her down stage.*

VASHTI. You have heard Mr. Llewellyn. He is spending all his life in doing good. You do not know how great a work he is doing. If Lady Eve is well in a year from now, will you build him a new church, a place worthy of him and the truths he speaks? That is the only thing I will take from you.

LORD ASGARBY. If my child's life is spared, in memory of her restoration I will raise a monument; it shall be the most beautiful church in Beachampton, and I will endow the minister with any income that you may ask.

VASHTI. Thank you! Thank you with all my heart. You will not let him know. He would n't accept it.

LORD ASGARBY. He shall not know.

JOPP. May I ask, Miss Dethic, what is the precise nature of the cure you propose to work upon Lady Eve?

VASHTI. That is my secret.

JOPP. Mr. Llewellyn, perhaps you can explain Miss Dethic's method?

JUDAH. Miss Dethic fasts for several days, and a strange unearthly power comes to her, which gives her strength not her own, to convey to those whom she desires to heal.

JOPP. I don't quite follow the operation. So far from giving strength, any lengthened period of fasting must weaken.

JUDAH. It weakens the body, but it gives beauty and strength to the spirit.

(*Jopp shakes his head.*)

Why should it seem strange to you? Can you not see that Miss Dethic is not as others?

JOPP. Evidently. (*To Dethic.*) Does she abstain from all kinds of food?

DETHIC. Absolutely.

[*Jopp whistles incredulously.*

VASHTI. You do not believe that I fast?

JOPP. My dear young lady, I always believe what 's told me.

DETHIC. But you whistled!

JOPP. Yes, I did whistle.

[*Pause.*

JUDAH. Do you deny her gifts?

JOPP. I have no opportunity of judging.

JUDAH. Inquire of those whom she has cured. They can testify to her powers.

JOPP. Fifteen years ago, sir, I analyzed a patent pill. It was composed of harmless, drastic, and poisonous drugs in about equal proportions. The patentee had made a fortune out of it, and thousands of his victims had given him testimonials.

JUDAH. Well?

JOPP. Since then the patentee has made another fortune, and a thousand more victims have given him testimonials.

JUDAH. Miss Dethic has submitted herself to every proof that can be offered to her.

JOPP. Not to mine.

[*Slight pause. Judah looks at Vashti, and makes a motion as if asking her to speak.*

VASHTI (*comes down to Jopp*). Will you put me to your proof?

JOPP (*rises very quietly*). Is it a challenge?

VASHTI. Yes, if you please.

JOPP. Um! (*Taking Lord Asgarby down stage.*) You mean this young lady to remain at the Castle?

LORD ASGARBY. Yes; Eve wishes it, and I wish it.

JOPP. And it is with your consent that she treats Lady Eve in some mysterious, occult way?

LORD ASGARBY. If you had but one child, and you loved her as I love Eve, you would listen to every quack and charlatan that promised to give her a few months' life.

JOPP. But your physicians?

LORD ASGARBY. I've no faith in them. They gave me hopes of the others to the very last, and they all died. Do as you please; I leave this matter in your hands.

JOPP. You wish me to act for you?

LORD ASGARBY. Yes, only, whatever you do, let Eve have her own way in everything.

JOPP (*goes to Vashti*). You propose to cure Lady Eve in your usual manner — by fasting?

VASHTI. Yes.

JOPP. You are willing for me to test the reality of your fast?

VASHTI. Have I not said so?

JOPP. You allow me to impose my own conditions?

VASHTI. Impose what conditions you please.

DETHIC. At the same time, I must warn you that a habit of doubting, an atmosphere of unbelief, does very materially interfere with a — a —

JOPP. With the success of miracles. Yes, I've noticed that. Asgarby, are the rooms in the old keep, the tower-rooms, occupied now?

LORD ASGARBY. No, they remain as they were in my father's time.

JOPP. May I use them?

LORD ASGARBY. Certainly.

JOPP. Thank you. (*To Vashti.*) There are three very delightful rooms in the old keep. They are quite modern. The late Lord Asgarby had them fitted up for his scientific library. Have they been occupied recently?

[*Dethic and Vashti show keen attention.*

LORD ASGARBY. Yes, when we were in Algiers last year, Roper lived in the keep, and the jewels were kept there, so I had a new safety lock put on the outer door.

JOPP. How many keys are there to that lock?

LORD ASGARBY. Only one.

JOPP. Only one! That will do! (*To Vashti.*) I shall confide you to my daughter. I shall give her that key, and she will take care that you have all the liberty consistent with — consistent with our watching you most thoroughly.

VASHTI. I may see my father sometimes?

[*Jopp looks curiously at Dethic, who tries to look sublimely unconcerned, but fails, shuffles, and looks rather uncomfortable.*

JOPP (*after having taken stock of Dethic for some time*). H'm-m! Well, perhaps sometimes.

DETHIC. It's of no consequence.

JOPP. And we begin, shall we say, to-morrow morning?

VASHTI. This afternoon — at once.

JOPP (*to himself*). Now is that girl really humbugging herself — or is she trying to humbug me? I'll give myself the benefit of the doubt.

[*Enter from window Lady Eve with Mrs. Prall, followed by Prall.*

LADY EVE (*excited, restless, flies to Vashti*). Miss Dethic, Mrs. Prall says you can stay with me from now; so you are my prisoner.

JOPP. Excuse me, Lady Eve, for the next three weeks Miss Dethic is my prisoner.

LADY EVE. What do you mean?

JOPP. Miss Dethic invariably fasts before curing her patients, and as she wishes us to be quite sure that her fasting is genuine, she has kindly asked me to put her to the test.

JUXON. Allow me to suggest, Jopp, that my test would be —

JOPP. Thank you, Mr. Prall. I shall employ my own test, and I am pretty certain about the result.

JUDAH. Won't you wait until you've obtained the result?

JOPP. You're right. I spoke too soon.

DETHIC. Quite so. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

JOPP. Pardon me. The proof of the pudding is in the digestion.

LADY EVE. But I may see Miss Dethic?

JOPP. Certainly, as often as you wish.

VASHTI. As you are to be my jailer, perhaps you will kindly tell me your name.

JOPP. My name? (*A sudden monosyllable like the effect of a little pistol shot.*) JOPP!

DETHIC. Jopp!

[*Shows a sudden shock of surprise, as if he were shot, but quickly recovers.*

VASHTI (*looks at Jopp. By an immense effort does not betray herself. Very faintly*). Professor Jopp?

JOPP. You've heard of me.

VASHTI. The Professor Jopp who exposed the spiritualists last year?

JOPP. The same Professor Jopp.

DETHIC (*having perfectly recovered, comes down to Jopp and offers hand*). My dear sir, let me shake you by the hand; I'm proud to think my dear child has an opportunity of convincing the world-renowned Professor Jopp of her extraordinary powers.

JOPP (*takes no notice of his proffered hand*). That's exactly what my spiritualist friend said to me last year. Poor beggar! I signed a petition to the Home Secretary the other day to get him out of jail.

VASHTI. You sent him to jail?

JOPP. No; his own cleverness did that. I'm trying to get him out.

[*Vashti looks frightened at him.*

JOPP. What's the matter?

VASHTI. Nothing — nothing!

JOPP. You still agree to submit to my test?

VASHTI. Yes, yes — have I not said yes? Put me to whatever test you please.

JUDAH. You hear, sir! Miss Dethic is in your hands! Try her! Lay snares! Set traps for her! You have no juggling trickster to deal with now! The power she serves stands ready to vouch for her, and your own lips shall be the witness of her truth and goodness to all the world.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE. *The conservatory and terrace. A conservatory outside the castle, opening on to the terrace, which runs along back of stage, and shows a flight of old stone steps with a crumbling wall on each side, covered with ivy, and overhung with the tops of the trees; a suggestion of considerable depth below. The steps lead up to the old castle keep. A doorway with a window over it. Beside the window a stone seat cut deeply into the wall, with steps leading on to the ramparts. This seat is large enough to conceal a man. Bright lamp in the conservatory, with wicker chairs and table on stage. A flood of summer moonlight on the old keep. Door opening from rooms in the castle. A light burning in window at the gate tower. An old Norman arch, ivy-covered, with door on right of stage. Piano is being played off stage and someone is singing; this at suitable intervals during the act until Lady Eve's entrance. When curtain rises Judah comes from warder's seat in recess to top of the steps; looks up at window of keep; then after a pause he sees Dethic. He then retires into the recess, and is hidden.*

Enter Dethic along terrace, in evening dress, as if just coming from dinner. He enters very cautiously, looking behind him to see if he is followed. Creeps cautiously on to terrace and looks up at the keep; whistles up towards gate-tower as if desirous of attracting the attention of some one within.

DETHIC (*on terrace at bottom of the keep steps; looks cautiously round, takes out a very large new key from pocket*). They 're all pretty safe: the men in the dining-room, the ladies in the drawing-room. I 've a good mind to risk it.

(*As if carelessly, but really looking all round to see if*

he is observed, opens the Norman gateway door; looks out; shuts it. Is about to go up steps, his back being towards the left. Sophie, in evening dress, enters through conservatory. Dethic turns round, confused.) Er — you 've left the drawing-room rather quickly, Miss Jopp!

SOPHIE. You 've left the dining-room *very* quickly, Mr. Dethic.

DETHIC. Yes. I 'm so fond of nature. Now that scene! (*Flourishing his right hand over the moonlit landscape, and calling Sophie's attention to it, while his left hand is putting the large key into his coat-tail pocket. He is standing with his back to audience, so this action is very distinct.*) To me there is something very sweetly mysterious about all that.

[*He has secreted the key.*

SOPHIE. The most sweetly mysterious thing to me, Mr. Dethic, is that your daughter should have looked so well without food until a few days ago.

DETHIC. Ah, you see, Miss Jopp, we have stood the ordeal and come out unscathed.

SOPHIE. There are three days longer yet!

DETHIC. But eighteen days have gone by without one morsel to her lips.

SOPHIE (*stares straight at him*). Eh, Mr. Dethic?

DETHIC. You 've kept the strictest watch over her all day. You 've locked her up there all night, and you 've never allowed the key of the tower rooms to pass for a moment out of your possession.

SOPHIE. No.

DETHIC. You have it now?

SOPHIE (*produces from pocket a key exactly the same in shape as the one Dethic has put into his*). There it is. [*Holds it up so that the audience can distinctly see the likeness between the keys.*

DETHIC. With that key in your possession you cannot entertain the least suspicion of our good faith.

SOPHIE (*pointing up to the window which is lighted*). You see the window to the tower-room?

DETHIC. Yes. The room where my dear child is imprisoned.

SOPHIE. That window was nailed up by my father's orders.

DETHIC. So that no food could possibly come through that way.

SOPHIE. Just so. Except that last Saturday I discovered that one of those little panes would take out, Mr. Dethic.

DETHIC. You don't say so? But you can't suppose that food could be conveyed through one of those panes at that distance? It's — it's really too absurd.

SOPHIE. It is absurd; yet, absurd as it is, your daughter's health and spirits, which had kept up precisely as if she were being fed, declined from the very day that my father and I had a wire-gauze put over the window, Mr. Dethic.

DETHIC (*affecting astonishment*). A wire-gauze!

SOPHIE. You hadn't noticed, perhaps.

DETHIC (*telling a good, solid lie*). No.

SOPHIE. Strange! And what is also strange is that since last Saturday your daughter has shown every symptom of starving.

[*Accidentally raises her voice a little, and speaks the word in such a tone that it can be heard by Judah.*

DETHIC. Starving!

SOPHIE (*in an unconcerned tone*). Yes; absurd, isn't it? I'm just going to her.

DETHIC. Shall we escort her to the drawing-room? Yes, I think we will!

[*With great eagerness, going toward Sophie.*

SOPHIE. No, I think we won't! (*Dethic's face falls very much.*) At least, not till my father comes from the dining-room. But Miss Dethic can walk along the terrace here, if —

DETHIC (*again delighted*). Yes, if —

SOPHIE. If you 'll be good enough to keep at the other end of it.

DETHIC (*again shows great disappointment*). Oh, by all means. (*Sophie goes up steps — takes out her key.*) Oh, you duck!

[*Shakes his fist at her as she goes up stage.*

SOPHIE (*suddenly turns round; nearly catches him in his threatening attitude. He drops it, tries to look unconcerned.*) Eh?

DETHIC. Eh?

SOPHIE. You spoke?

DETHIC. No, no; merely thought out loud. The dining-room windows are open, I see. I 'll rejoin his lordship.

[*Sophie goes to the top of steps and opens the keep door. Dethic makes a grimace at her and goes off along terrace.*

SOPHIE (*calling*). Miss Dethic! (*Vashti comes to the keep door. A marked difference from the last act; very haggard and weak, but with an expression of fixed endurance. Judah looks down from the warder's seat and listens.*) I hope you are better.

VASHTI (*at top of steps*). I am quite well. Why do you always ask so anxiously after me?

SOPHIE. I was afraid you might not be able to hold out three days longer.

VASHTI. You need n't fear.

SOPHIE. Would you like to walk on the terrace for a little while?

VASHTI. Yes. (*Comes down. With forced cheerfulness.*) What a glorious night! I could dance, I could sing!

[*Runs quickly past Sophie with affected gaiety. Stops exhausted at bottom.*

SOPHIE. Ah! You 're playing a very foolish game.

VASHTI. I 'm playing no game, except with death, for dear Lady Eve's life, and I shall win. (*Sophie shrugs her shoulders.*) You think I 'm cheating you.

SOPHIE. No, I think you are cheating yourself. I shall be at the end of the terrace with your father, so you are quite free for the time.

[*Exit along terrace after Dethic. Vashti watches her off. Judah watches her also, and comes down steps gradually.*

VASHTI (*sinks into seat*). Why does n't my father bring me something? If there were any berries — anything to stop these wolves that gnaw me! Why should n't I give in? And let Mr. Llewellyn know me for what I am? No, I dare not! I 'll starve to death before he shall think me a cheat. Besides, am I a cheat? I do not willingly deceive them.

JUDAH (*has come down steps behind her*). Miss Dethic.

VASHTI (*turning with great surprise*). Mr. Llewellyn! How did you get here?

JUDAH. I climbed up from the moat.

VASHTI. From the moat? (*Looks over the parapet; shudders.*) How could you do such a dangerous thing? You might have been killed.

JUDAH. You forget; I was a shepherd all my youth. Before I was twelve I climbed the side of a mountain three times as high as this — for a bird's nest.

VASHTI. Three times as high as this!

JUDAH. I was dared to do it. I brought the young ones down to the ground; and when I heard the mother crying for them, I climbed up again and put them back in the nest.

VASHTI (*again looking down*). It makes me giddy to look down. Why have you come here?

JUDAH. To be near you. I 've been here every night since you have been in the castle.

VASHTI. Every night?

JUDAH. Yes. I could n't keep away.

VASHTI. You have n't seen — no one has seen you?

JUDAH. No, I think not. They all sleep on the other side of the house; and look (*pointing up to the warder's*

seat), that seat in the hollow in the wall yonder seems to have been built on purpose that I might watch over you.

[*Comes down on to terrace.*

VASHTI. Lady Eve told me it was the warder's place in the olden times; that stone seat was his bed.

JUDAH. It has been mine. (*Comes to her. Jopp enters conservatory. Comes in carelessly from dinner. Stops suddenly and listens.*) I've stayed here half the night praying that strength might be given you to finish your task. In three days your trial will be over; you will have wrestled for Lady Eve's life, and you will have conquered. I heard that girl taunt you just now. She does n't believe in you.

VASHTI. But you believe in me?

JUDAH. You know I do. You know I have never doubted you.

JOPP (*has listened; shows satisfaction*). My young Welshman is honest.

[*Exit Jopp.*

VASHTI. Thank you, thank you, Mr. Llewellyn, with all my heart. You don't know how those words help me.

JUDAH (*approaching her*). Help you! I help you! Oh, you're above me, like heaven itself. But hear me. I must tell you — I love you.

VASHTI. Mr. Llewellyn, say no more.

JUDAH. I love you. Forgive my daring to say it. I'm mad to speak of human love to you. You're scarcely of this world at all. Oh! but I love you, I love you! From the first moment I saw you, when that poor woman tried to thank you for the health you had given her, and your face turned to her like an angel's in your pity, I have loved you. You have been the secret spring of all my power. When I speak to the people, it is your voice that speaks through me. Your love is a flame on my tongue. All the world is transfigured because you are in it. When I walk along the streets, all the men

and women seem to be smitten with your beauty. There's nothing common or mean or wicked anywhere: everything is good and bright and pure. Your presence makes all the earth beautiful and sacred, and your goodness is like your beauty, it spreads goodness all round you, as your beauty spreads beauty. You make me half divine. I love you, I love you!

[*Has sunk on his knees.*

VASHTI (*her face has shown alternate pain and pleasure. She speaks very quietly*). If I were not good — if I were wicked?

JUDAH. You cannot be other than yourself.

VASHTI. But would you love me, whatever I was? Satisfy my woman's curiosity — would you love me if I were *not* good?

JUDAH. If you were not good, it would not be you. (*Looking at her closely.*) What do you mean?

[*A pause.*

VASHTI. Nothing. I only asked out of curiosity. You must go. Miss Jopp will be coming soon. Good-night.

JUDAH. You are not offended?

VASHTI (*very calm, without showing any trace of feeling*). Offended! — no. Oh, please say no more.

JUDAH (*after a pause of pain*). I will not — but I am as you are — something apart from other men and women. All my life has been different from others. Till six years ago I never had any companions but the hills and my father's cattle. Till I saw you I had never known what the love of man for woman was.

VASHTI. You have never loved any one before?

JUDAH. Never. To-night I have spoken the only words of love that I shall ever speak. (*Her face glows with delight.*) No woman will ever again hear me say that I love her.

VASHTI (*with great delight*). Are you sure of that?

JUDAH. Quite sure. It is not possible for me to love again.

VASHTI. Hark! Some one's coming. You must go. Quick!

[*Judah runs up steps; then gets over the parapet. Vashti follows to top of steps.*

JUDAH (*descending the wall of the moat*). Good-bye! Give me that handkerchief you wear.

[*She takes the handkerchief from her neck and throws it to him. He catches it. Vashti leans over parapet.*

VASHTI. Take care, take care! (*He goes down; disappears.*) Oh, if he were killed I would dash myself over too, and die with him! (*Looks again; whispers down.*) Are you safe?

JUDAH (*below*). Quite; do not fear.

VASHTI. If I had the courage to tell him! If he could know the truth of me, and yet love me! I will. I *will* tell him; and yet — I dare not. Oh, if you knew how it breaks my heart to deceive you!

[*Dethic, with cigar lighted, saunters on furtively along terrace. Vashti is bending over parapet.*

DETHIC (*in a loud whisper*). Vashti!

VASHTI (*turns round*). Bring me some food; I'm perishing with hunger.

DETHIC. By and by. I've been to London, and Tozer —

VASHTI. Hush!

[*Sophie enters along terrace, and overhears Dethic's last words. Dethic is confused.*

DETHIC (*going on*). Yes, I saw Tozer, and he said —

[*Sees Sophie; stops.*

SOPHIE (*to Dethic*). Pray don't let me interrupt Mr. Tozer's message.

DETHIC (*confused*). Oh, Tozer said nothing of importance —

SOPHIE. Ah! A member of Parliament possibly, or a popular preacher. Will you come with me into the drawing-room, Miss Dethic, or do you prefer being alone?

VASHTI (*at top of steps*). I would rather be alone.

SOPHIE. You are sure you won't take any food?

[*Dethic signs to her to say no, unseen by Sophie.*

VASHTI. I do not need it.

[*Pale, fixed, determined. Goes in at keep gateway: Sophie shrugs her shoulders. Goes up steps to fasten the gate.*

DETHIC. Do you hear that? This is a glorious triumph for us.

SOPHIE (*turns on step, fixing him*). Ah, *you* have dined; your daughter *has n't!*

DETHIC (*going off*). If you don't come to some bad end, it will be a pity.

[*Erit along terrace. Sophie comes down, having locked door.*

[*Juxon Prall enters through conservatory, in a towering rage.*

JUXON (*throws book on table*). Really, it's most lamentable!

[*Goes up stage; leans on wall.*

SOPHIE. What is?

JUXON. For the past six years I have endeavoured to instil into my poor dear mother's mind the merest elements of logic. Will you believe me, Miss Jopp, that she fails to grasp the necessary consequence in the simplest syllogism?

SOPHIE. How strange it is, Mr. Juxon, that people like your parents should possess such a gifted son as you!

JUXON. It is one of the freaks of heredity. My brother James is not gifted. When I think of poor James, I am ashamed of my attainments.

SOPHIE. Why?

JUXON. James being quite a fool, I feel that I have unintentionally deprived him of his intellectual birthright.

SOPHIE. You ought to feel grateful for your own extraordinary endowments.

JUXON (*approaching her*). Then you — you really have the penetration, Miss Jopp, to see that my acquire-

ments are — if I may say so without egoism — not quite of the common order?

[*He somehow gets her hand, and continues during the scene nursing it between both of his in a seesaw way, moving her hand between his up and down about four inches below his chin, and using them to emphasize his discourse occasionally.*

SOPHIE. I never met with any one quite so congenial to me.

JUXON. Really — really — Miss Jopp, your mind, although necessarily possessing some feminine limitations, is one of the most philosophic I have ever met. In fact, for some time past — ever since we attended those lectures by Professor Dobney last season —

SOPHIE. On mental pathology; very interesting, but Dobney is quite wrong in his deductions.

JUXON. Decidedly Dobney is wrong — deplorably wrong. Dobney is an insufferable, self-satisfied prig. I shall be compelled to tell Dobney my opinion of him one of these days (*After a pause.*) But — we 'll leave Dobney for the time, and, as I was saying — as I was saying —

[*Hesitates; gets a little confused.*

SOPHIE (*helping him*). Shall we sit down?

JUXON (*looks round*). No; no, I don't think so. I think I can formulate my thoughts better standing. You 'll permit me to speak quite frankly?

SOPHIE. Do so; I wish it.

JUXON. In approaching the really momentous subject of marriage — (*After a pause.*) Have I made it plain to you that I am about to suggest that we should become united for life?

SOPHIE (*unembarrassed*). I gathered as much.

JUXON. Thank you. I have considered the matter very carefully, and — you fully understand, do you not, that I am now making you a definitive offer of marriage?

SOPHIE (*quite unembarrassed*). Oh, yes. And I may say

frankly, I am disposed to accept you — under certain conditions.

JUXON. Pecuniary, I suppose? You are aware I am quite dependent upon my father. I cannot truthfully affirm that my poor father is of the slightest use in the world, and yet, so far as I can judge, there is very little prospect of his immediately retiring from it. Not that I wish him to do so; still, it would simplify matters. However, as I am one of his only two children, I suppose he will make some provision for me.

SOPHIE. My objections were not pecuniary, but physiological.

JUXON. Very necessary! Extremely necessary! How sensible of you! The neglect of the simplest physiological laws is simply deplorable. But, my dear Miss Jopp, my physical development, though somewhat retarded by my great mental exertions, is in the most satisfying state.

SOPHIE. You had a bad cough last winter.

JUXON. Nothing, nothing, I assure you. (*Strikes his chest twice with Sophie's hand. Coughs.*) My lungs are organically sound. In fact, for a man of medium height and build, my whole frame is unusually vigorous and elastic. However, I would, of course, insure my life; and it might perhaps be some satisfaction to you if I were to bring you the certificate from the Insurance Society.

SOPHIE. If you don't mind.

JUXON. Not at all. Then I suppose we may consider the matter settled.

SOPHIE (*unmoved*). Quite so — so far as I am concerned.

JUXON. There's nothing else to discuss?

SOPHIE. No, not that I remember.

[*Long pause. He retains her hand; is about to raise it to his lips, then is undecided whether he should kiss her face. She appears absolutely indifferent. He hesitates between her lips and her hand; finally raises*

her hand to his lips, kisses it rather gingerly, drops it suddenly. Sophie goes down right. Juxon goes to table, takes his book, and returns before speaking.

JUXON. I really think we may congratulate ourselves.

SOPHIE. I wonder where everybody is.

JUXON. I trust you don't feel dull.

SOPHIE (*quickly*). Not at all.

JUXON. I'm glad of that. (*Takes her hand as before.*) We might perhaps now sit down for a while. Shall we?

SOPHIE. Yes. (*They sit.*) How quickly we came to a perfect understanding!

JUXON. Yes. (*Pauses.*) I do really think we may congratulate ourselves.

SOPHIE. I think so.

[*Jopp and Prall come into conservatory, smoking, and stand talking.*

JUXON. Our fathers — there's no necessity to mention our decision to them at present.

SOPHIE (*after a pause of consideration*). No, I should say not. Marriage being a purely personal matter —

JUXON. Quite so.

SOPHIE. It concerns ourselves only.

JUXON. Precisely. I shall, of course, inform my poor father and mother before we marry.

SOPHIE. Yes. I may possibly tell my father, but he'll not interfere; he's far too sensible.

JUXON. I wish I could say the same of mine.

JOPP (*saunters on to terrace*). Oh, here you are. How's our prisoner?

SOPHIE. Hungry. Mr. Dethic seems most anxious to speak to her.

JOPP. She has already had one visitor.

SOPHIE. Who?

JOPP. That strange young minister, Mr. Llewellyn, has been here. I heard him speak to her a few minutes ago.

SOPHIE. He may have brought her food.

JOPP. Oh no. I heard quite enough to satisfy me.

Besides, there's no doubt about his honesty. He's a fanatic, but he's perfectly sincere.

MR. PRALL. Eighteen days gone out of the twenty-one. Come, Jopp, what do you say now?

JOPP. Miss Dethic is a marvel.

MR. PRALL. You candidly confess yourself beaten?

JOPP. I candidly confess, Prall, I don't know how it's done.

[*Dethic strolls on to terrace with cigar. Listening, leans against wall.*

MR. PRALL. Oh, come, come, Jopp; you don't suspect any trickery?

JOPP. My dear Prall, I've lived sixty years in this world. I have never met with a single instance of cheating or deception or fraud of any description. I am told such things are occasionally practised on this planet, though happily not in this degree of longitude. Still, I do occasionally meet with—

MR. PRALL. With what?

JOPP. With things that puzzle me. However, no amount of evidence that my eyes or ears can bring shall ever shake my theory that human nature is absolutely above suspicon.

MR. PRALL. Now, Jopp, I consider that very unhandsome. You find yourself beaten, and you hint at treachery.

[*Dethic is listening on terrace.*

SOPHIE. We are not beaten yet, Mr. Prall. There are three days more, and we intend from to-morrow to watch Miss Dethic more closely.

DETHIC (*to himself*). Oh, you beauty.

(*Mrs. Prall enters at conservatory.*)

You may make what rules you like, Miss Jopp. My dear child will prove herself triumphant, as she has done hitherto. Has she not, Mrs. Prall?

MRS. PRALL. She has, indeed. I'm quite sure there is no deception.

[*Exit Dethic through archway. Enter Lady Eve and Lord Asgarby on terrace.*

LADY EVE. What are you talking about? Miss Dethic? I 'm sure that she has this strange power, whatever it is. Since she has been in the house I 've felt so much better.

LORD ASGARBY (*to Jopp*). You hear that?

LADY EVE. Is n't she coming to say good-night to me?

SOPHIE. I 'll bring her to you.

[*Goes up the keep steps and opens door.*

MRS. PRALL (*aside to Juxon*). I wish, Juxon, you would n't be so friendly with that girl. She seems to me a highly unsuitable companion for a young man.

JUXON. We will not discuss that question just now, my dear mother.

SOPHIE (*at top of steps, calls*). Miss Dethic!

(*Vashti appears from tower door.*)

Lady Eve wants to say good-night to you.

[*Vashti runs down steps with bravado and assumed cheerfulness, to Lady Eve. They go down stage together.*

JOPP (*to himself; watching her*). Very well put on, young lady; very well put on.

[*Sophie has come down steps. Juxon joins her at back. They cross together and exeunt along terrace.*

LORD ASGARBY. How are you this evening, Miss Dethic?

VASHTI. Quite well, Lord Asgarby — wonderfully well. (*With assumed gaiety.*) We 'll take a run in the garden — shall we, Lady Eve?

LADY EVE (*excitedly*). Yes; let 's race to the lodge gates. Professor Jopp, Miss Dethic will win the day.

JOPP. Apparently.

LADY EVE. You see, strength does come to those to whom she wills it.

JOPP. Yes, I see.

LADY EVE. You are quite convinced?

JOPP. Quite.

LADY EVE. Then there is no necessity for her to fast any longer?

JOPP. None whatever. I cordially recommend her to give up her dangerous experiment.

VASHTI. I shall not give up my experiment, dangerous or not. (*To Lady Eve.*) Come, it's stifling here. We'll race to the lodge — no, to the lake or anywhere.

LADY EVE (*catching her excitement*). Yes. Come along.

JOPP (*intercepts them as they are going*). Stay, Miss Dethic. If you care for her health, persuade her not to stay up. Come, Lady Eve, it's nearly ten o'clock, and whatever Miss Dethic's mysterious method is, it is far more likely to act if you keep early hours. Come, say good-night.

LADY EVE. No. (*Turns away petulantly.*) I don't want to go to bed. I never really feel alive till after dinner. Miss Dethic — (*Vashti goes to her*) — I want to stay near you. Come! The moonlight's lovely. Our race!

[*Jopp again intercepts them.*

JOPP. The night air by the lake is dangerous, Miss Dethic. Persuade her to go to bed.

VASHTI (*after a pause; to Lady Eve*). Professor Jopp is right. Say good-night to us.

LADY EVE (*pouting*). Oh, very well. (*Kisses her.*) (*To Lord Asgarby*). Good-night.

LORD ASGARBY. Good-night, my dear.

MRS. PRALL. Good-night, Lady Eve.

[*Exeunt Mr. and Mrs. Prall.*

LORD ASGARBY (*kisses her very passionately*). You'll soon be fast asleep.

LADY EVE (*excitedly*). No, I shan't. I never slept till three last night. And then I dreamed — I had the strangest dream about you. (*Runs to Vashti.*) I must tell you. I dreamed we were drowning together. Professor Jopp, have you ever been nearly drowned? It's enchanting! At first we tried to swim, and it was hard work to keep up; and the waves dashed over us,

and took away our breath; and then I caught you in my arms, and I said, "Don't let us try to keep alive any more. Let's sink, and see what it is like." And I felt so strong. I dragged you under the water! it was delightful! Down — down — down — I felt like a mermaid dragging you down to my home; and we kept on sinking, and the deeper we got, the clearer and sweeter the water was; it was full of lovely gold and silver fish, and they swam round us; and we went through gardens of waving purple seaweed, and all the little bubbles in the water turned into diamonds and hung round our necks, and dragged us deeper still, and we kept on falling for hours; and at last you wanted to leave me, but I clung to you and pulled you down, and said, "How can you want to go back to that hateful world? Come down and drown with me, drown — drown — drown!" And you said, "Let me go — I want to get back to life. There is some one who loves me up there." And I said, "There are two who love you down here — Death and I. Stay with us and die. You don't know how sweet it is." But you kissed me and said good-bye; and I tried to keep you, but you faded out of my arms; and when I tried to hold you, there was no one there, and I cried out, "Stay with me — stay with me!" And then I woke, and I was crying, and it was just daylight! You won't leave me!

[*Throwing her arms round Vashti, desperately weeping, her head on Vashti's knee.*

VASHTI. Do not fear. If I cannot bring you back to life with me, I will stay and drown with you.

[*Re-enter Mr. and Mrs. Prall.*

LADY EVE (*kisses Vashti passionately; throws her arms around her neck*). I don't want to go away from you.

JOPP (*has been listening and showing impatience and anxiety at Lady Eve's excitement*). Come, Lady Eve, this excitement will never do. Come, come! Bed, bed, bed! Say good-night.

LADY EVE. Good-night, Professor Jopp.

[*She shakes his hand, then crosses to conservatory steps.*

JOPP. And no dreams to-night.

LADY EVE (*on conservatory steps*). Yes, I shall dream of you.

JOPP. You won't drown me?

LADY EVE. No, I'll fly away with you to the stars.

[*Kisses her hand to Vashti, and exit through conservatory.*

[*Re-enter Dethic at archway.*

JOPP (*aside, sternly, to Vashti*). If you wish to keep her alive, don't let her excite herself as she has done to-night. You understand?

VASHTI (*after a pause*). I understand.

[*Exit Jopp along terrace. Vashti goes up to terrace.*

MR. PRALL (*cordially*). She's wonderfully improved, Asgarby.

DETHIC. I told Lord Asgarby how it would be. I hope, my lord, you are satisfied.

LORD ASGARBY. She certainly seems better.

[*Roper enters through conservatory.*

ROPER. Mr. Prall's carriage.

[*Re-enter Sophie and Juxon.*

MR. PRALL. Good-night, Asgarby. We'll come over again on Monday. Good-night, Miss Dethic.

[*Shakes hands and crosses to conservatory.*

MRS. PRALL (*shakes hands with Lord Asgarby. To Vashti.*) Good-night, dear. (*Kisses Vashti; then crosses to conservatory.*) Are you ready, Juxon?

JUXON (*lighting cigarette*). I would prefer to walk. Our drive home from the Selwyns' the other night was far from pleasant to *me*.

MR. PRALL. You would insist on arguing all the way.

JUXON. My dear father, when you advance such extraordinary opinions, how can I refrain from endeavouring to put you right? Ah, when shall I reconcile myself

to the inevitable folly of the vast majority of my fellow-creatures?

MR. PRALL. Sooner than the majority of your fellow-creatures will reconcile themselves to your wisdom.

MRS. PRALL. Then you 'll walk home, Juxon?

JUXON. If you don't mind. I 'm really afraid of being drawn into some discussion with you or my father, and really I am not equal to the exertion to-night — I 'm not, indeed.

MR. PRALL. Very well, my boy, we will spare you our company.

[*Mr. and Mrs. Prall and Lord Asgarby exeunt through conservatory.*

DETHIC (*creeping up to Vashti*). Look out for me as soon as the house is asleep. (*Sophie turns sharply, nearly catching him.*) A lovely moon!

[*Exit Dethic along terrace.*

SOPHIE (*to Juxon*). Don't go away — come back here in an hour.

JUXON. Why?

SOPHIE. Mr. Dethic is going to run the blockade to-night. (*Jopp and Lord Asgarby re-enter the conservatory.*) We 'll watch him. Hush!

JUXON (*to Lord Asgarby*). Good-night, Lord Asgarby. Good-night, Jopp. My poor father seems quite happy in displaying his folly and ignorance. Did you ever witness such a lamentable exhibition? Tchk! Tchk!

[*Exit Juxon through conservatory.*

LORD ASGARBY (*to Jopp*). You heard what Eve said — she 's really better!

[*Very anxiously.*

JOPP. A little, perhaps. But you must keep her from these fits of excitement. They 'll do no end of mischief.

LORD ASGARBY. Good-night, Miss Dethic. You 're sure your own health is not suffering?

[*Shakes hands with her.*

VASHTI. Quite sure, my lord. Good-night.

[*Exit Lord Asgarby by terrace, after shaking hands with Sophie.*

SOPHIE. Shall I see you safely housed for the night, Miss Dethic?

VASHTI. I am ready.

SOPHIE. Come, then.

[*Goes up steps and into tower.*

VASHTI. Good-night, Professor Jopp.

JOPP. Good-night.

VASHTI (*triumphantly*). You see, I shall count Lady Eve amongst those whom I have cured.

JOPP. You mean those who have cured themselves.

VASHTI. Cured themselves?

JOPP. If you don't know the secret of this mysterious power of yours, I'll explain it to you. These good folks whom you cure are all suffering from different kinds of nervous diseases, where only volition is required to make them better. Their faith in you gives the necessary shock to their volition, and brings its powers into exercise. But in all cases of organic disease, I assure you you are as helpless as — as any regular practitioner; and that's saying a good deal.

VASHTI. But there is no proof that I have not cured them.

JOPP. Certainly there is no proof. And that is why I think you are behaving very foolishly.

VASHTI. What do you mean?

JOPP. If your patients insist on getting well, neither I nor any one else can possibly prove you have not cured them. But — I can and will prove that you can't live without eating.

VASHTI (*goes up a few steps; staggers. He comes to her assistance. She repulses him; stands panting.*) You'll prove that? Very well. Prove it — if you can.

JOPP. You are foolish. Think again. Trust me. You shall find me one of the best friends you ever had.

VASHTI. What do you mean?

JOPP. You've set yourself a task beyond your strength. Give it up.

VASHTI. Ah! You find I've beaten you, and now you want me to give you the victory.

JOPP (*quietly, earnestly, rather tenderly*). I want no victory, Miss Dethic. Come, let's both give up. What do you say?

VASHTI (*after a pause*). No.

JOPP (*shrugs his shoulders; changes his tone*). So be it. Only take care, because—

VASHTI. Because?

JOPP. The Home Secretary has n't let my spiritualist friend out of jail yet.

VASHTI (*terribly frightened, but trying to hide it with a pretended smile; frightened, hoarse whisper*). Would you send me to jail?

JOPP. I should be sorry: but you're trifling with the truth; you're playing upon sacred feelings; and I warn you I shall be merciless to you.

[*Vashti shows great fright. Staggers on steps. Sophie holds the door open for her.*

SOPHIE. You're ill, Miss Dethic. Shan't I stay with you?

[*Offers to support her.*

VASHTI. Thank you. I'm quite well. Good-night.

[*Goes into keep. Sophie locks the door after her.*

JOPP (*as Sophie comes down-stairs*). That's a damned silly girl, but she's got pluck.

SOPHIE. There's a relief expedition intended to-night.

JOPP. She's locked in. No one can get to her.

SOPHIE. No, but still I think we'd better watch the father.

[*Enter Roper by terrace, carrying lantern.*

ROPER. Can I lock up, sir?

JOPP. Yes; we're just going off to bed. Roper, could you leave the conservatory unlocked for to-night?

ROPER. Certainly, sir. I can lock the drawing-room

door, so that there's no fear of anybody getting into the house.

JOPP. Thank you, Roper. Good-night.

ROPER. Good-night, sir. Young lady in the keep room going on quite comfortable, I hope?

JOPP. Quite, Roper, so she says. Good-night.

ROPER. Good-night, sir.

[*Exeunt Jopp and Sophie along terrace. Roper turns out lamp in conservatory; exit; shuts door, and is heard to turn key in lock.*

[*Front of stage dark. Moonlight on terrace, and part of stage. After a long pause Judah is seen climbing over parapet. Comes to the front of the keep.*

JUDAH (*looking toward Vashti's window*). I cannot leave you. You draw me to you, lodestar of purity and goodness. Oh, there is something more than mortal in your beauty! And I dared to speak of love to you, of earthly love!—I, who am not worthy to breathe the same air, or touch your garment with my lips. Forgive me! Let me but walk where your feet have trodden, speak sometimes with you, look upon your heavenly beauty, see you do your gracious acts of mercy and kindness, and it shall be enough for me. (*Standing on top of steps, looking up at the house.*) The house is quiet; all the lights are out; they are asleep. (*Turns again toward keep.*) Are you asleep, too, worn out with fasting and watching? Giving up your life that others may live? Oh, let me be your sentinel, your watch-dog, and keep guard that no evil thing comes near you. Nay, no evil thing could come near you. Keep her! Give her strength to defeat her enemies, and show Thy power to them that deny Thee!

[*Going into warder's niche, is hidden.*

[*Pause. Dethic enters at terrace, looking cautiously round.*

DETHIC. That confounded moon! What the plague does it want to shine to-night for? as if it could n't blaze

away some other night! Thank goodness, everybody sleeps on the other side of the house. They 're all safely in bed by this time. What 's this? The conservatory door open? There 's some one in there. (*Striking a match and searching conservatory.*) No. It 's been left open by accident. If I 'd known that, I might have got out this way. I must risk it and give her the key. (*Goes up the steps; Judah is in the shade of the keep watching him. Dethic pulls out a key, opens door very quietly, looking up at the house to see whether he is watched all the while. Opens door.*) Vashti! Vashti! [*Takes food out of his pocket.*

VASHTI (*in doorway*). Have you brought it?

DETHIC. Yes, my darling. Here, here. Come down to the conservatory. I must n't leave the house again. (*Gives her food. Vashti eats ravenously.*) I 've got plenty of food for you, but I had to drop out of the first-floor window, so I was obliged to leave it in my room.

VASHTI. Go and fetch it. I must have it. I 'm starving.

DETHIC (*brings her down steps*). My darling, that Miss Jopp is on the lookout. I must n't be seen again. Here, take this key. You see, I got it copied. Tozer did it. I stole it from Miss Jopp. She never missed it, and I put it back in her pocket without her even knowing it. They 've forgotten to lock up the conservatory. You come in there and wait. You know that door that leads into the drawing-room. I'll bring it to you there.

VASHTI. But that door is locked and bolted.

DETHIC. The key 's left in it on the other side. I took stock of that. You wait down there, and I 'll give it to you in ten minutes from now.

VASHTI. Bring it me, bring it me! Quick! I don't want to be found down here.

DETHIC. All right, my love. Wait there in the conservatory. I won't keep you long.

VASHTI. Make haste!

(*Dethic goes off at terrace. Vashti watches him going off. Judah rises in the warder's seat and comes down steps. She hears his footsteps, turns round, and sees him on steps.*)

You! (*Deadly quiet whisper.*) You heard?

JUDAH (*very calm*). Every word.

VASHTI. You know what I am?

JUDAH (*still very calm*). Don't I tell you I heard all?

VASHTI (*after a pause*). What do you think of me? (*He does not reply. In a more agitated tone.*) What do you think of me? (*Still no reply. Again, more excited.*) Tell me; I must know. What do you think of me?

JUDAH. I cannot think. Good is evil, day is night. Are you angel or devil — or both? What are you? The brightest saint of all hell, the blackest fiend of all heaven? What are you? Oh, I know! And I'd have died rather than know!

VASHTI. Don't speak like that. I told you I was not a saint, but only a woman — a vain, foolish, ambitious girl; but not — not willingly wicked, only weak. Oh! Don't think badly of me. I can't bear it (*imploringly*), I can't bear it.

[*Kneels and clings to him.*

JUDAH (*pushing her away*). You'd cast your snares round me again. You would make me believe in you now — now — after what I have heard! And — God forgive me — if I listen to you I shall be ready to sell my eternal peace, my very soul, at your bidding. Let me go, woman — let me go!

[*As he throws her from him, Vashti, on her knees, clings to him, holds him.*

VASHTI (*very imploringly*). No, no; hear me first — you must hear me — you shall hear me, and then kill me if you like — for I cannot live if you hate me! Hear me — oh! it is the very last thing I shall ever beg of you.

JUDAH (*tearing himself away from her*). Woman! I know you.

VASHTI. No — you do not know me; and you will not hear me. (*Bursts into tears. He is going, but is stopped by her appealing attitude. Kneeling.*) You don't know what my childhood and girlhood were like — how often we were pressed for money. Sometimes we had scarcely bread enough to eat. We went to Spain. I found I was able to cure many of the foolish country people if they only believed in me; and my father persuaded me if I could only show them that I could live without food, it would be a sign of my possessing supernatural power. I began, and it was as he said. I found everybody believed in me. When I had once begun, I was obliged to go on. We came back to England, and then I met you; and at first I was pleased to see what power I had over you. But when I saw that you believed in me and loved me, I gradually felt how wicked I 'd been. I tried again and again to give it up; I tried to tell you. I wanted you to know the truth about me, and yet I could n't bear you to think that I was not worthy of your love. You know it now. Oh! tell me you forgive me. (*Seizing his hand; imploringly.*) Oh, say you forgive me.

JUDAH (*has regained calmness*). I forgive you. Let me go.

[*Goes up stage; she retains his hand.*

VASHTI. Good-bye.

[*She takes his hand to her lips, and kisses it.*

JUDAH (*fired by her kiss*). What have you done? (*Looks at her in the moonlight.*) Oh, you are more beautiful than ever to-night. (*Looking at her passionately.*) This is all a dream. I blot the past hour from my memory. You 're mad to say that you could cheat and deceive. I will not believe you. (*Takes both her hands in his.*) You are very truth. How dare you slander yourself?

VASHTI. Ah! No! (*Drawing away from him; withdraws her hand.*) Know me for what I am — a cheat, an impostor, a liar.

JUDAH. Hush! hush! You shall not say so.

VASHTI. Oh! why should you deceive yourself? You know the truth of me at last, and I am glad — yes, I am glad. Think what I am — vain, weak, false!

JUDAH. Why, yes, perhaps you are, and therefore so much nearer me. (*Raises her and clasps her in his arms.*) I thought you out of my reach, up there amongst the stars; and you're of this earth, like myself, a woman made for me! Ah, yes! I'm glad you are what you are, for I can make you mine now.

VASHTI (*breaking away from him*). No, no, for your own sake you must give me up; have no more to do with me. Disown me; forget me!

JUDAH. Forget you!

VASHTI. You must. For your own sake — for the sake of your future. Forget me! It is best for both; but — you won't betray me?

JUDAH. Betray you? I love you. (*Embracing her.*) Oh, don't you see you are nearer to me for this night; we are bound to each other. I love you! I love you! My wife!

VASHTI (*recoiling from him, recovers herself with immense effort. Speaks calmly.*) I cannot be your wife — I'm not worthy of you.

JUDAH. You do not love me?

VASHTI. I cannot be your wife. I won't drag you down to me.

(*Noise of footsteps heard outside the terrace.*)

Ah, hush. Who's that?

[*Judah is about to send her up steps, but realizing they will be seen, draws her back into the conservatory. They hide behind palms. Sophie and Jopp come along terrace, listening at back.*

SOPHIE. I certainly heard voices.

JOPP. I thought so.

[*Crosses to archway; looks off.*

SOPHIE. Everything is quiet. Let 's wait here. It 's the best place to watch the keep.

JOPP (*sits*). Deuce take the girl! (*Yawns.*) To think I should be fool enough to let her rob me of my beauty-sleep to prove to the British public that she 's a swindler.

SOPHIE. There will be some satisfaction in thoroughly exposing her, and seeing her safely locked up.

JOPP. It 's the British public that ought to be locked up till it learns wisdom.

SOPHIE. It would be locked up for ever, then.

JOPP. I dare say. Still I must own that in the great epic war between rogues and fools, all my sympathies go with the rogues.

SOPHIE. So do mine; but that 's no reason why we should not hang both rogues and fools.

JOPP. Oh, I mean to punish my lady. She should have accepted my terms an hour ago; now it 's too late.

[*A noise of very gently withdrawing locks and bolts is heard at the drawing-room door.*

SOPHIE (*rises, seizes Jopp's hand; Jopp rises to meet her*). Hush! What did I tell you? Some one is at the drawing-room door.

JOPP. Mr. Dethic. We 'll let him get well at his work before we disturb him. The archway — quick!

[*Sophie goes off at archway. Jopp follows, and closes door after him. Dethic cautiously opens door in conservatory and is coming on.*

JUDAH (*in conservatory, in a whisper*). Keep back! If you are seen, you 'll ruin her. (*Hurries Dethic off. To Vashti.*) Quick, up the steps! Lock yourself in.

[*Vashti takes the key that Dethic has given her out of her pocket, rushes up steps with it, goes in, closes keep door after her, locks herself in. Judah goes up steps; takes his place in the warder's niche and is hidden.*

[*Jopp and Sophie re-enter from archway door on terrace and come out.*

JOPP. He's gone up!

SOPHIE. Yes, I heard his steps.

JOPP. Give me the key. You go along the terrace and give the alarm.

[*Exit Sophie along the terrace.*

He has another key, then.

[*Jopp goes up steps; opens keep door. Fire-bell is heard to ring violently. General alarm of the house. Lord Asgarby enters along terrace. Comes to foot of steps. Sophie re-enters from terrace after the ringing of the fire-bell is done.*

LORD ASGARBY. What is it, Jopp?

JOPP (*at top of steps*). Mr. Dethic is now in the keep, taking food to his daughter.

[*Re-enter Sophie with Lady Eve, followed by Roper with lantern, and several Servants.*

LORD ASGARBY. Where is the key?

JOPP. I have it. (*Opens the keep door and calls.*) Mr. Dethic, Mr. Dethic!

VASHTI (*comes to door*). What is the matter?

LORD ASGARBY. Your father is in there — ask him to come out.

VASHTI. My father is not here.

JOPP. You are alone?

VASHTI. I am alone. Search the place if you please.

[*Jopp goes in. Judah comes down from the warder's seat on to the terrace. Vashti follows him.*

LORD ASGARBY. Mr. Llewellyn! What are you doing here?

JUDAH. I've watched here every night of Miss Dethic's stay.

LORD ASGARBY. You've watched here? How long have you been here to-night?

JUDAH. Ever since the house went to rest.

[*Comes down steps.*

LORD ASGARBY. You have brought Miss Dethic food?

JUDAH. No.

[*Jopp returns from keep-room, crestfallen.*

JOPP. I 'm mistaken; I own it. But I heard voices, I 'm sure. Who was it? Who was speaking here a few moments ago? Mr. Llewellyn! (*Challenges Judah.*) You know something of this, sir.

JUDAH. I know nothing. (*Pause. Jopp looks at him severely.*) Don't you believe me?

JOPP (*looking at him*). I don't know. Give me your oath — you have not brought Miss Dethic any food.

[*Vashti looks at Judah.*

JUDAH. My oath — I have not brought Miss Dethic any food.

JOPP. Your oath — you have not seen her take any.

[*Vashti looks at him.*

JUDAH (*after a pause*). My oath — I have not seen her take any.

[*Vashti shows relief.*

JOPP. Your oath — she has not been outside that door, to your knowledge.

[*Longer pause.*

JUDAH. My oath — she has not been outside that door to my knowledge.

JOPP (*looks at him*). Enough! I take your word. I was mistaken.

CURTAIN

(*A year passes between Acts II and III.*)

ACT III

SCENE. *Same as in Act I.*

Discover Lady Eve seated in armchair, and Lord Asgarby standing by Lady Eve.

LADY EVE. Then everything 's settled.

LORD ASGARBY. Everything. Granger brings the deed to-day, and Mr. Llewellyn and Papworthy are to meet me and read it over.

LADY EVE. And on the foundation-stone it is to be carved that the building is in memory of my getting well again.

LORD ASGARBY. Yes.

LADY EVE. And nothing is to be said about Vashti having cured me?

LORD ASGARBY. No, my dear; it is better to leave such questions alone.

LADY EVE (*pettishly*). But it is she who has cured me. If she had not come to Asgarby when she did, the wind would have blown me away before this.

LORD ASGARBY. Eve, my darling, don't speak like this!

LADY EVE. Why not? Leaves must fall, even rose-leaves; and then they must n't litter the garden — they must be swept away to make room for the live flowers.

[*Goes to window and exit.*

LORD ASGARBY. She 's better; she 's stronger than she has ever been. What does it matter what the cause is?

[*Lady Eve comes swiftly in again.*

LADY EVE. Here 's that dreadful Mr. Dethic. He 's always hinting to me about money. I 'm sure Vashti won't like him to live with her and Mr. Llewellyn. Can't you pension him to live away from them?

LORD ASGARBY. Yes, dear, if you wish it.

[*Dethic enters at window; rather better dressed; affable, familiar, jaunty.*

DETHIC. Ha! Do you know, my lord, the more I see of this noble historical pile, the more I 'm intoxicated with it!

LORD ASGARBY (*coolly*). Indeed, Mr. Dethic.

DETHIC. Language entirely fails to convey the depth of my attachment to this venerable place and its venerable owner.

LORD ASGARBY. We will spare you the expression of your feelings, Mr. Dethic. Lady Eve and I have been speaking of your daughter's approaching marriage to Mr. Llewellyn. (*Dethic shows great interest.*) You will not, I suppose, live with them?

DETHIC. Well, my lord, nothing has been mentioned about my future, but I see no reason why I should not be perfectly happy and comfortable with my dear children.

LORD ASGARBY. That arrangement will suit them?

DETHIC. I should say so. I always make myself agreeable in all circles of society, and if nobody expresses a violent dislike to my company, I take it for granted I 'm welcome, and — if I may use a playful term — chum on!

LORD ASGARBY. Miss Dethic refuses to accept my offer of a provision for herself.

DETHIC. It 's ungrateful of her. I 've argued it with her scores of times. I know your lordship will never suspect us of mercenary motives; but still, if any trifling way of showing your gratitude should suggest itself —

[*Vashti enters. Lady Eve joins her. Vashti kisses her.*

DETHIC (*seeing Vashti, drops his voice*). I think, my lord, I could better express my paternal care for Vashti's future if we were out of her hearing.

LORD ASGARBY. Doubtless. Come this way, Mr. Dethic. I have a proposal to make to you on the subject.

DETHIC (*very gratefully*). Thank you, my lord, thank you.

[*Lord Asgarby and Dethic exeunt.*

[*Vashti seats herself. Lady Eve kneels by her side.*

LADY EVE. You grow sadder and sadder the nearer you get to your wedding-day. How is it?

VASHTI. No, no!

LADY EVE. Yes, you do. You love Mr. Llewellyn?

VASHTI. Love him!

LADY EVE. And he loves you. I wish I had a lover. Oh, if somebody would but once — only once — look at me as Mr. Llewellyn looks at you!

VASHTI (*radiant*). He does love me!

LADY EVE. Yes, but he has changed.

VASHTI (*alarmed*). Changed! No, no! He cannot change.

LADY EVE. Yes, he does n't love you now as he did a year ago.

VASHTI. Oh, don't say that! don't say that! What do you mean?

LADY EVE. He used to look at you as if he wanted to worship you; now he looks at you as if he wanted to protect you.

VASHTI (*reassured — a great sigh of relief; in a low, pleased voice*). I want him to protect me.

[*Enter Judah at window, very pale, thinner, older.*

JUDAH. Lord Asgarby told me I should find you here.

[*Lady Eve runs to him, takes his hand, looks at him critically for a few seconds.*

LADY EVE. You too! (*Looks from one to the other.*) What makes you both so sad? My father has promised me everything I asked him for you. It is to be the most magnificent building in Beachampton, and it is to be endowed while you are its minister, so that you will be perfectly happy, both of you, for all your lives.

JUDAH. I have done nothing to deserve this, Lady Eve. I cannot take it.

[*Lord Asgarby enters at window.*

LADY EVE. Yes, you must! Mr. Llewellyn says he will not take your gift. Tell him he must.

LORD ASGARBY. Indeed you must, Mr. Llewellyn. I

promised if my child's life were spared that whatever Miss Dethic should ask I would give her.

JUDAH. But it is too much; besides, I have done nothing.

LORD ASGARBY. You are doing immense good; your example is even better than your words. (*Judah winces.*) We need such men as you — truthful, upright, honest, open as the day. I do not ask what your creed is: your actions are enough for me —

[*Judah shows compunction.*

LORD ASGARBY (*going up to Lady Eve*). What are you doing, Eve?

LADY EVE (*blowing away the thistledown*). Seeing how long I shall live.

LORD ASGARBY. How can you tell?

LADY EVE. Don't you see? I have blown six times, and all the seeds have flown from the stalk. I shall live just six years longer.

LORD ASGARBY (*clasping her very tenderly*). Eve!

[*Exeunt Lord Asgarby and Lady Eve by window. Judah and Vashti watch them off, then instinctively go to each other.*

VASHTI (*taking his hands*). You are ill?

JUDAH. It is nothing. You?

VASHTI. I'm well enough; but you — you are working too hard. Every one says you must break down. (*After a pause; in a frightened whisper.*) What ailed you yesterday morning?

JUDAH. In the service?

VASHTI. Yes.

JUDAH. Nothing. Why? I spoke as usual, did I not?

VASHTI. Yes; but much more powerfully. This last year — ever since — (*pause*) — ever since that dreadful night here, your tongue seems to be on fire; you speak as you never spoke before.

JUDAH. Do I? I ought to be able to proclaim the truth, for I know what lying is.

VASHTI. Hush, hush! don't speak like that! Tell me —

what was it yesterday morning?

JUDAH. You noticed, then?

VASHTI. Only that you were much disturbed, and once I thought you would have broken down. What was it?

JUDAH. The same as it has been all the year; only it was worse than ever yesterday. Every sentence I spoke I heard shouted in my ears, "Lies, lies; come down, liar! Come down! Lies! Lies! Lies!" It spoke so plainly I thought all the congregation must have heard it; and afterwards, as I poured out the wine, it laughed in the cup and said, "Go on, go on! Poison them, poison them with your lies! Poison them!"

VASHTI (*clinging to him—in a frightened whisper*). Hush! hush! You must n't speak like this. Indeed, there was nothing.

JUDAH. I know there was nothing, but I heard it. I 've heard it all night long. It 's been with me on my walk here this morning—on the other side of the hedge as I came along. It kept mocking at me! Hark! It 's here now. In this room. Don't you hear it?

VASHTI. No; there is not a sound.

JUDAH. Yes. Hark; there! Listen! You hear what it says. "Liar! Hypocrite! Liar! Hypocrite! Liar! Hypocrite!"

[*Stretches out his hands in mute appeal; then falls on settee, shivering with horror.*

VASHTI (*goes to him*). Oh, my dear one, my best loved! Indeed, indeed, all is still as the grave!

JUDAH. If it were so! If I could stop my ears forever! Silence! Silence! Eternal silence! (*Pause.*) We 'll leave this place!

VASHTI. Yes, yes; where shall we go?

JUDAH. Anywhere! anywhere! I can't stay here! Why can't they give up building this church for me?

VASHTI. Lady Eve has set her heart upon it. The architect and the lawyer and everybody are coming this

afternoon. It is to be the most beautiful building in the city.

JUDAH. It won't stand. If they lay the foundation as deep as the roots of the hills, and build the walls twenty feet thick, it can't stand. It 's built on lies.

VASHTI. Oh, don't speak like this! You tear my heart to pieces.

[*Bursts into tears.*

JUDAH (*very tenderly takes her to him*). Forgive me, dear! You, too, look weary. I ought not to have told you.

VASHTI. Yes, yes, let me share all your griefs, all your burdens, as you have shared mine. Oh! I can't bear to think what I have done. If I should be discovered! if I should bring disgrace upon you now!

JUDAH. Very well, let it be so; I can bear it.

VASHTI. No! No! Every one believes in you, and I am so proud of you; I could n't bear to have your name dragged in the mire with mine. Give me up even now; send me away from you; let me go.

JUDAH. Not for every blessing in this world will I part from you. (*Takes her in his arms.*) Heap them all up — fame, riches, health, peace of mind, length of days, honour, friendship, every joy of body, mind, and soul that the heart of man can desire — put them in one scale and your love in the other. I will not have them — I don't want them. I want your love — I will not barter you away for all the world contains.

[*Clasps her very tenderly.*

VASHTI. Oh! but think what I am.

JUDAH. You are yourself! You are myself! Whatever you are I will make myself, that I may be like you. I will deserve you, be sure! I will be your mate. If you are evil, I will be evil too, so that at the last I may taste every drop of suffering that you taste, feel every pang, and keep your soul side by side with mine for ever!

[*Pause.*

VASHTI. If you knew how I have tried to be good since I have known you! Every moment of my life I try to be just that woman you thought me before you knew me for what I am. I have repented — oh, most bitterly! You too — you have repented?

JUDAH. No, I cannot. The oath I took that night has burnt into me. Every fibre of me is a lie. (*Vashti tears herself away from him with a cry; bursts into tears. Judah rises, goes to her.*) What is it? What now?

VASHTI. Oh, I have ruined you for ever. You were the best, the most honourable man on earth. You were truth itself, and I have dragged you down to me. How can you love me?

JUDAH (*very tenderly*). How can I not love you?

(*Vashti bursts into tears, turns and buries her head in his arms. He folds her most tenderly to him; she is sobbing in his arms.*)

Hush! hush! Hold fast to me! We're shipwrecked together. If we find land, we'll find it together. If we perish, we'll perish together! Either way you are mine! There's nothing else much matters! Don't blame yourself. All is as it should be. You're mine; there's nothing I would change.

[*Kisses her.*

[*Enter Jopp, shown in by Roper.*

ROPER. I'll tell his lordship you're here, sir.

[*Exit by window.*

[*Judah and Vashti show surprise and some degree of alarm.*

JOPP. Good-morning, Mr. Llewellyn. (*He advances to Judah, holds out his hand; Judah will not take it.*) No? I'm your friend. You don't believe me? (*Looking at Vashti.*) I told Miss Dethic I was her friend once; she would n't believe me; and yet she'd have been wise to make me her friend.

VASHTI. Aren't you my friend now?

JOPP (*looks at her; then a direct* —) No, I 'm not.

VASHTI (*alarmed*). Why have you come to Asgarby?

JOPP. I always spend a few weeks with Lord Asgarby at this time of the year.

VASHTI. But you were not expected.

JOPP. No; the fact is I have a little business with Lord Asgarby and — (*looking at Judah*) — and with Mr. Llewellyn too. May I be so ungallant as to ask you to leave us?

JUDAH. You can speak to me before Miss Dethic. (*Takes her hand.*) I have no business with any one that she has not a right to hear.

JOPP. I must speak to you alone.

JUDAH. I will not hear.

[*Turns away to window.*

VASHTI (*intercepting Judah*). Yes, yes; please, please, hear what he has to say; I'll go. (*Showing great alarm; goes to window; stops; comes down to Jopp very anxiously.*) This business that has brought you to Asgarby so suddenly — is it about me?

JOPP (*after a pause; looks at her*). Yes.

[*Vashti makes a gesture of alarm; Judah reassures her, and then goes with her to window. Exit Vashti. Judah comes down to Jopp.*

JOPP (*holding out his hand*). Come; give me your hand. I tell you I 'm your friend.

JUDAH (*will not take it*). When I 've heard what you have to say.

JOPP. Very well; very well. You 're going to marry that young lady?

JUDAH. Next Thursday.

JOPP (*looks kindly at Judah again*). When I was in practice, I had to cauterize a young labourer who had been bitten by a mad dog — a fine, sturdy young fellow with a very limited vocabulary. He swore at me fearfully at the time, but he thanked me afterwards.

JUDAH. Well?

JOPP. I'm going to cauterize you.

JUDAH. Go on.

JOPP (*puts his hand affectionately on Judah's shoulder*). My lad, I haven't seen you for a year. But I wouldn't say that I'm not just a little fond of you. I know the value of such men as you. It is your man who believes in something, believes in himself, believes in his fellow-men, in the woman he loves, in the faith his fathers have taught him — that's the man that's good for something in this world. (*Dryly.*) I don't believe in anything myself, so I'm good for nothing. (*Judah moves uneasily away from him.*) Don't move away from me. I'm determined to be your friend.

JUDAH. Say what you have to say.

JOPP. You believe in this Miss Dethic. I knew you were mistaken a year ago. I tried all I could to open your eyes then, but she was too many for us. I knew very well all the while she was deceiving Lord Asgarby, deceiving Lady Eve, deceiving you.

JUDAH. She was not deceiving me.

JOPP. My dear sir, you were blind — although you know, that night here, for a moment I was disposed to think that you might be aiding her in her lies.

JUDAH. You thought that?

JOPP. Forgive me; it was only for a moment. I don't mind telling you that, if she was foolish enough to play her tricks again, I would let you be her keeper, and I would believe your word as easily as I would disbelieve her oath.

JUDAH. Indeed! Yet she is as truthful as I am.

JOPP. Tut, tut! You've got a fine career before you; I don't want to see you throw it away. This woman is an impostor. I can prove it; all the country shall ring with it, and in a week to-day, if she is in England at all, she shall be in prison.

JUDAH. You'll prove her an impostor? How?

JOPP. There is but one key to those tower rooms.

JUDAH. Which was in your daughter's keeping.

JOPP. Mr. Dethic had another key made. I've got the lockskmith who made it for him. He's waiting for me at the Asgarby Arms now. I have had detectives at work for months. I've fished out all the past history of these Dethics, and they can't escape me. As soon as I have seen Lord Asgarby, I bring my man up from the village and prove it.

JUDAH (*looks at Jopp for some seconds, then, calmly*). Bring him.

JOPP. You will marry Miss Dethic next Thursday?

JUDAH. Yes.

JOPP. Are you mad? Her character is lost! The man who marries her will be utterly ruined for life.

JUDAH. I am that man! Prove your worst against her. Write "Liar" on her forehead, make her name a byword all over England, hunt her to shame, to prison, to another country; I'm her partner! I love her! There's no locksmith living can put bars between her and me, and the sword was never forged that can divide us in twain. Do your worst! To-morrow she shall be my wife.

[*Exit after Vashti by window.*

JOPP (*looking after him*). That's a splendid—fool! Well, never again while this world wags will I permit myself the luxury of any interference with its love affairs.

[*Juxon enters at window, followed by Sophie. Sophie crosses behind and sits in armchair.*

JUXON. Good-morning, Jopp. How d' ye do?

[*Holds out his hand very limply and feebly.*

JOPP (*shaking hands*). Good-morning, Mr. Prall. How are you?

JUXON. I regret I am in a very low condition of health.

JOPP. How's that?

JUXON. I do not choose to expose the infirmity of those

who by some curious stroke of irony stand to me in the relation of father and mother, but their fatuous imbecility — I can really call it by no other name — has at last assumed such colossal proportions, that companionship with them is impossible to me. I cannot remain any longer under the same roof with them. It is positively sapping my vitality.

JOPP. You don't say so?

JUXON. I assure you, Jopp, the constant endeavour for the last six months to root out from my father's mind the pernicious doctrines of protection and reciprocity has been nothing less than martyrdom to me — martyrdom!

[*Wipes his forehead in an agony of recollection.*

JOPP (*good-humouredly*). Give him up as a bad job.

JUXON. I really must. In fact, it is with that view that — (*glancing at Sophie*) — I have approached Miss Jopp with overtures — *Glancing a little nervously at her.*) Have I not?

SOPHIE (*looking straight at her father*). Mr. Prall and I intend to marry shortly, father.

JOPP (*jumps up from his seat*). What the dev — what?

SOPHIE. My dear father, pray control yourself. There is surely no reason for any intemperance of speech or feeling! Juxon and I have thoroughly made up our minds. (*Looking at him very firmly and straight, with great determination.*) You surely don't propose to offer any resistance.

JOPP (*looks at them both for a few moments; sees she is determined*). No.

[*Sits down.*

SOPHIE (*sweetly*). Thank you. Then we need n't remind you that we are considerably over twenty-one.

JOPP (*sitting serenely, drops into a good-humoured, indifferent, ironic tone*). Been engaged long?

SOPHIE. Nearly twelve months.

JOPP. Got anything to marry on?

SOPHIE. Nothing definite, at present.

JOPP. How are you going to live?

JUXON. I have various things in contemplation.

JOPP. What in particular?

JUXON. When I was making arrangements for my cremation the other day, the post of curator to the new cremation museum was offered to me, with a free residence overlooking the present Necropolis. I need hardly say the cremation of — er — other people would be a superlatively congenial occupation to me.

JOPP. Then why did n't you take it?

JUXON. The salary was so deplorably insufficient.

JOPP. Anything else in view?

JUXON. My father is remarkably well off.

JOPP. Well, won't he do something for you?

JUXON (*to Jopp*). By another bitter stroke of irony, the entire result of my six months' incessant argument with him on the science of political economy has been the destruction of a will in which he left me half his property, which is now made over to institutions whose very existence I have again and again warned him are plague-spots on society.

JOPP (*begins very solemnly*). Young man — (*Stops.*) No; why should I? (*Turns to Sophie.*) Sophie, you 've quite made up your mind to marry this gentleman?

SOPHIE. My dear father, you cannot suppose that in a matter of such importance as marriage, I should have spoken before I *had* made up my mind, or that I should tolerate the least interference from a third person.

JOPP (*shrugs his shoulders; calmly accepts the situation*). All right. (*To Juxon, very solemnly.*) Young man, I cannot make the least provision for my daughter; therefore will you do me a favour?

JUXON. Certainly, if it does n't involve any sacrifice of principle.

JOPP. Would you oblige me by immediately adopting your father's views on political economy?

JUXON (*shakes his head obstinately*). I really can't do that — I can't indeed; but —

JOPP. But what?

JUXON. But — (*Looking off.*) Here are my father and mother coming. Sophie has told me what you have discovered about this Miss Dethic and her father.

JOPP. Indeed! Sophie has told you —

JUXON. Everything. If you would consent to let them leave Asgarby without any public exposure, I think I could so arrange matters with my father that he would make ample provision for my future.

JOPP. What do you mean?

JUXON. Will you allow me a few minutes' conversation with my father? I will make my proposals to him, and bring them to you and Miss Jopp afterwards. Will you permit me?

JOPP. You will not commit me to any course of action?

JUXON. Not in the least.

JOPP. Come along, Sophie.

[*Exit Jopp at door. Sophie rises and follows him. As they go off, enter Mr. and Mrs. Prall by window.*

PRALL. There! Those Jopps are here again!

MRS. PRALL. Yes, that was surely that dreadful young person.

[*Looks after Sophie.*

JUXON. My dear mother, will you oblige me by refraining from comments on Miss Jopp?

MRS. PRALL. I never met with a more disagreeable girl in my life. I'm sure the hussy knows all sorts of horrid things that she should n't.

JUXON (*with his sickly smile of superiority*). I have myself directed Miss Jopp's studies, and I believe I am acquainted with the nature and extent of her knowledge on all subjects.

MRS. PRALL. I am ashamed of you, Juxon, to encour-

age an unmarried woman in these dreadful investigations.

JUXON. She did not require any encouragement.

MRS. PRALL. I dare say not.

JUXON. So far as I can judge, the young women of the present day are lamentably ignorant; they may be said to know next to nothing.

PRALL (*looking at newspaper*). Oh, don't they?

JUXON (*continuing with his sickly smile*). I have trained Miss Jopp with the view of making her a fit companion for life.

PRALL. Companion for life — for whom?

JUXON. For me, or for some man of equal intellectual breadth and vigour.

PRALL. Oh! and is it to be you or the other man?

JUXON. It is to be distinctly me. We marry as soon as possible.

PRALL. And how do you mean to live?

JUXON. My dear sir — (*approaching Prall*) — seeing that you are responsible for bringing me into existence, I think I may very fitly address that question to you. How am I to live? Of course (*with a sickly smile of superiority*) with such literary and scientific attainments as mine, we could n't possibly starve.

PRALL. Oh, could n't you? You try!

[*Turns away and sits in armchair.*

JUXON. But with your large fortune it is incontestably your duty — I say it is your duty — to provide for me in a suitable manner.

PRALL. I have already disposed of my fortune between your brother Jim and charities.

JUXON. I beg you will reconsider the matter, sir; as, if I am thrown on my own resources I shall be compelled to act in a manner that would be extremely disagreeable to you.

PRALL. Oh, how, sir?

JUXON. Jopp and I have discovered the whole history

of these Dethics. The man was a professional conjurer — Professor Janus, the Wizard of the East. We have also discovered the locksmith who made the key of the tower rooms for Mr. Dethic; we have, in fact, the most complete evidence of the whole imposture.

PRALL (*taken aback*). Oh! And what do you mean to do?

JUXON. I shall firstly write a letter to the Times, explaining how your peculiarly illogical intellect rendered you an easy victim; I shall then deal with the matter in the reviews and magazines; and, finally, I shall begin my long-contemplated work, "The History of Dupes," in which I shall deal at length with you as the most notorious example of credulity known in this century. In the meantime Professor Jopp will have made a public exposure of the girl and her father.

PRALL (*completely overcome*). Oh! You are going to do this — when?

JUXON. I shall write to the Times to-morrow, unless —

PRALL. Unless what?

JUXON. Unless you relieve me of the necessity of providing for my future. In that case I should persuade Jopp to let them off, and I should refrain from writing my history of your delusions. Weigh the matter carefully and let me know. I wish to spare you.

[*Goes up to table, takes hat and stick.*

PRALL. How much per annum would you take?

JUXON. Sufficient to pursue my studies, and to provide me with a comfortable home at — at some distance from your residence. Understand me: if I persuade Jopp to allow this affair to blow over, I must not be held to condone the mistakes and misrepresentations in your book. Nor do I acquiesce in your monstrous theories of reciprocity and protection. Understand that clearly!

[*Exit Juxon.*

PRALL. I wish I had sent that boy to sea instead of his brother Jim.

MRS. PRALL. Jim was never intellectual.

PRALL. No, thank Heaven. What's to be done? If there's a public exposure, what will become of my book?

MRS. PRALL. You have said nothing in it that is n't true.

PRALL. No — at least, of course, if Jopp has been inquiring, there's no telling what construction may be put upon my truths.

MRS. PRALL. Nobody shall ever make me believe the girl's an impostor. James, whatever you do, don't withdraw your book from circulation.

PRALL (*firmly*). I won't. After all, the public is the best judge. They like it, and there's a new edition just coming out.

MRS. PRALL. I would n't alter a single line.

PRALL (*positively*). I won't!

MRS. PRALL. Whatever you have once asserted, never retract it.

PRALL (*same tone*). I won't.

MRS. PRALL. And if there are any truths that are at all doubtful, I should make them very emphatic.

PRALL. I will! I will — only — (*uneasily*) — if Juxon writes to the Times, and Jopp proves the girl's an impostor, it may place my truths in a very awkward light.

MRS. PRALL. Never mind. Repeat them over and over again, and in the end some one will believe them.

PRALL (*anxiously*). Yes; but it's very extraordinary how many truths can be disproved, you know; and if there's a great public scandal — Caroline, for the sake of keeping my truths untampered with, I shall make Juxon that allowance.

[*Exeunt by window.*

[*Enter Lord Asgarby and Jopp.*

LORD ASGARBY. My dear Jopp, this is a most welcome surprise. You're going to stay, of course?

JOPP. No, I've come on business. You have still got those Dethics here?

LORD ASGARBY. Yes. I have kept my promise to the girl. I'm building a new church for Mr. Llewellyn, and endowing it. The deeds are to be signed this morning.

JOPP. Then I've come just in time. You must go no further, Asgarby. I have the whole history of these people. I can prove the father an impostor his whole life through.

LORD ASGARBY. Of course he's an impostor; but Eve loves the girl, and has made me promise to make her a settlement on her marriage, and — blame me if you like, Jopp — I know I'm being duped — I know I'm a coward, and a fool perhaps — but I can't deny Eve anything. When I think she is the last of us, and in a few years I may be left alone —

[*Breaks down; turns away and hides his head.*

[*Lady Eve runs on.*

LADY EVE. Oh, here you are, Professor Jopp. Sophie told me you were come. You're just in time.

JOPP. What for, Lady Eve?

LADY EVE. To play the hypocrite for once, will you?

JOPP. Certainly, if you will coach me.

LADY EVE. Well, first of all you are to say that I am quite well and strong. What's the matter, father?

LORD ASGARBY. Nothing, Eve, nothing!

LADY EVE. Tears! (*To Jopp.*) You've been telling him I shall die.

JOPP. No, Lady Eve.

LADY EVE. Well, perhaps I shall; but not yet, not while my dear Vashti is near me to keep me alive. (*Jopp smiles.*) You're not to smile, Professor Jopp. It's true! Come, father; they are all in the library, and the deeds are ready. Where shall we sign them?

LORD ASGARBY. It does n't matter; anywhere.

LADY EVE. Then let us sign them here — here where I first saw Vashti; and (*to Jopp*) you shall be a witness, will you? (*Coaxingly.*) Just to please me.

JOPP. To please you, Lady Eve, I 'd witness anything.

LADY EVE. I know you 're laughing up your sleeve.

JOPP. No, no, Lady Eve.

LADY EVE. Yes. You think it 's all moonshine, don't you?

JOPP. Certainly not.

LADY EVE. Yes, you do. I've read your books. But what 's the use?

JOPP. The use of what?

LADY EVE. Of proving all the fairy tales are false; it only makes the children unhappy.

JOPP (*taking her hands very tenderly*). And the grown-up people too.

[*Exit Lady Eve.*

LORD ASGARBY (*goes up to Jopp very anxiously*). What do you think of her?

JOPP. She 's certainly better.

LORD ASGARBY. You own it. And she will get well? There 's a chance of her living to old age? Tell me!

JOPP (*very quietly*). My dear Asgarby, she may live some years, but she will not live to old age.

LORD ASGARBY. Till womanhood?

JOPP. Over the threshold, perhaps.

LORD ASGARBY. And, knowing that she cannot live longer, you ask me to thwart her — to send this Miss Dethic away? My dear Jopp, you say you have fresh evidence against these people — (*Action of remonstrance from Jopp.*) I don't want to hear it. They will not live at the castle after next week — (*Gesture of remonstrance from Jopp.*) Let me go on now. I can't help it, Jopp — I know it 's only superstition; I know there 's no reason for it, but I feel that somehow Eve 's life does depend on Miss Dethic — (*Action*

of remonstrance from Jopp.) At any rate, you can see that it would be dangerous to Eve to part them.

JOPP. Yes, there would be a danger to Eve.

LORD ASGARBY. Then for her sake you will spare them, and say nothing of what you know?

JOPP (*after a pause*). Yes, Asgarby, I'll spare them. [*Offers hand.*

LORD ASGARBY (*shakes his hand heartily*). Thank you, Jopp, thank you. I'll just go and see where these people are, and we will get the deeds signed as soon as possible.

[*Exit Asgarby.*

JOPP (*alone*). After all, why not believe the fairy tales? Why not pretend there is a dryad in every tree, and a nymph in every brook? Nymphs and dryads may be as good names for the great secret as any other. Perhaps there is no great secret after all. (*Looking off.*) Here comes that infernal scoundrel! So I shall be obliged to let you and your precious daughter off after all, shall I?

[*Enter Dethic at window, affable, serene, cheerful as usual.*

DETHIC (*holding out his hand*). Ah, how do you do, my dear professor?

JOPP. How do *you* do, my dear *professor?*

DETHIC (*slightly alarmed*). Professor?

JOPP. A title I share with you. I am professor of biology; you are professor of the art of making plum-puddings in other people's hats, and conveying other people's watches and coins from their pockets into yours.

(*Dethic looks ghastly. Jopp glances at his own watch-chain; handles it.*)

Don't be alarmed! I'm sure you wouldn't practise on a brother professor.

DETHIC (*frightened, but screwing up his courage as far as possible*). I think you are mistaking me for —

JOPP. Some other *professor?* No, professor, I 'm not. Come, own up, Professor *Janus.* (*Winks at him good-humouredly.*) What made you give up the conjuring business, eh?

DETHIC (*after a pause*). Well, it did n't pay.

JOPP. Ah! then you had to turn your attention to something else.

DETHIC (*trying to brazen it out*). Look here, let 's understand one another, professor.

JOPP. Just so, *professor*, let us.

DETHIC (*very firmly*). Because I am a conjurer is no reason that I 'm not an honest man.

JOPP. No, there must be some other reason for that.

DETHIC. Eh?

JOPP. What made you take the name of Dethic?

DETHIC. Well, I had to take some name, and I — I thought Dethic was a very good one.

JOPP. Capital name! (*Comes up to him; winks at him again. Very good-humoured, very quiet, coaxing tone.*) How did you manage to get the food to her for the first twelve days, eh?

DETHIC (*loud — angry*). How dare you imply — how dare you imply —

JOPP (*very quiet and good-tempered*). Come, come, no secrets from a brother professor, you know. Besides — (*quiet, genial whisper*) — I 've got the man who made you the key.

DETHIC (*turns very pale*). No!

JOPP. Yes, I have. Tozer, you know.

DETHIC. Got him — where?

JOPP. He 's here in the village.

DETHIC (*collapses; very humbly*). Oh, professor, you won't be hard on — on —

JOPP. On a brother professor? No. I 'm going to let you and your daughter off scot-free.

DETHIC (*overjoyed*). What! You are! Upon my word you 're really the noblest man I ever met in all my life.

JOPP. On one condition.

DETHIC. Anything — anything. I accept it, whatever it is. I'm so grateful to you there's nothing I would n't do for you.

JOPP. You sail straight away to-morrow for America or Australia!

DETHIC. Either! America or Australia, whichever you please — it's immaterial. Anything else, professor?

JOPP. You stay there for the rest of your life.

DETHIC. I will. I give you my word of honour I will. Anything else, professor?

JOPP. Yes. As I am deprived of the pleasure of dusting your jacket in public, I really must indulge myself in the luxury of telling you in private that you are one of the most rascally humbugs, impostors, liars, thieves, and swindlers that I have ever met! (*Very passionately*). And you may thank your lucky stars that the state of Lady Eve's health does n't allow me to expose you as you deserve, you blackguard.

DETHIC (*takes it very calmly; after a pause*). Anything else, professor?

JOPP. Nothing else, *professor.*

DETHIC. Then I suppose I may take the liberty of saying *au revoir.*

JOPP. And you may take the further liberty of saying adieu.

DETHIC. I will. Adieu, professor.

[*Exit Dethic.*

[*Enter Judah at window.*

JUDAH (*intensely calm*). Lord Asgarby asked me to wait for him here.

JOPP. He is in the next room, I believe. Mr. Llewellyn, I find I am mistaken about Miss Dethic.

JUDAH. Mistaken!

JOPP. I have no evidence against her. I wish you and your bride a happy future.

JUDAH (*calm, dreamy, absorbed*). Yes, our future will be happy.

JOPP. You have every reason to think so. Mr. Dethic will leave the country, and you will begin your new life without a cloud.

JUDAH. Yes. Without a cloud!

JOPP (*noticing Judah's abstraction*). I say that, so far as I am concerned, Miss Dethic will be quite safe.

JUDAH. Thank you. Yes, she will be quite safe.

JOPP. After all, there's not one of us that dares to have all his life stripped bare.

JUDAH (*turns and looks at him*). You think not? Do you suppose there is anything in my past life I would not show to you and to all the world, when it is already known where no secrets can be hidden?

JOPP. You are lucky if you have no secrets, Mr. Llewellyn.

JUDAH. I have none. I have nothing that I dare to hide.

JOPP. I congratulate you.

[*Lord Asgarby enters, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Prall.*

LORD ASGARBY. Ah! (*calling off*). Will you all come this way, please?

[*Enter Morson and Granger with papers, followed by Papworthy and two other Trustees.*

LORD ASGARBY. Now, Granger, the deeds of gift. (*Granger gives him deed.*) And, Morson, will you bring the plans of the new building? Where is Miss Dethic?

JUDAH. She is waiting on the terrace outside. I'll fetch her.

[*Exit Judah. He returns in a few minutes with Vashti, who is deeply affected, trembling, ashamed.*

LORD ASGARBY. Papworthy, I shall want you and your brother trustees to execute the deed. Is it all prepared?

PAPWORTHY. Everything. There is nothing to do but to sign.

[*Enter Judah and Vashti.*

JUDAH (*speaking in a low tone to her*). Have courage! It will soon be over.

LORD ASGARBY. Miss Dethic, Mr. Llewellyn, I have to beg your acceptance of a marriage present from Lady Eve and myself — the grounds on which your present church is built, £20,000 for rebuilding it according to the plans that Mr. Morson has prepared, and an endowment for the living while you shall be its minister. Will you look over the deed? (*Giving it to him.*) Lady Eve will be here in a minute.

JUDAH. Miss Dethic has something to say first. (*To Vashti.*) Speak! Don't be afraid. A few bold words and all is over. Speak! I am beside you. Nothing can harm you — speak!

[*Pause.*

VASHTI (*speaks in a low, ashamed voice*). Lord Asgarby, you do not know me. I have deceived you and Lady Eve. I came into your house to deceive you — I have deceived all who believe in me. I have no supernatural powers. It has been all a pretence — a falsehood from beginning to end. (*Turns to Judah.*) I have said it — now let me go.

JUDAH (*taking her hand*). Stay! I have my share of the burden to bear.

VASHTI. No, no! You shall not! Why should you sacrifice yourself? Lord Asgarby, do not hear him. It was his love for me that blinded him. He is worthy of your gift and of your friendship. Give them to him, and — think no more of me.

JUDAH. No, your guilt is mine. I claim my share of it. (*To Jopp.*) Put the oath to me again that you put that night.

JOPP. What do you mean?

JUDAH. Ask me if I knew her deceit — if I helped her

to deceive. Do you hear? Quick! I can't sleep at night. I've not had one moment's rest since. My food is bitter! My conscience burns me! Oh, quench this fire! Do you hear? Put me to my oath.

JOPP. Is it possible?

JUDAH. You won't? Then hear me, hear me, all of you! I lied! I lied! Take back my false oath; let the truth return to my lips! Let my heart find peace, and my eyelids sleep again! You all know me now for what I am; let all who honoured me and followed me know me too. Hide nothing! Let it be blazed about the city. (*To Lord Asgarby.*) Take back your gift. (*Gives deed to Lord Asgarby.*) We will take nothing from you! Nothing! Nothing! (*Goes to Vashti.*) It's done! (*Takes her hand.*) Our path is straight now; we can walk safely all our lives.

[*Taking her up stage.*

LORD ASGARBY. But your fortune — what will you do?

JUDAH. Leave this place, and work out our repentance together in some place where we are not known.

JOPP. No, Mr. Llewellyn. You have conquered yourself. Stay here, live down your fault, amongst the people whom you have deceived. You shall have one true friend as often as I am here.

LORD ASGARBY. And you shall have another friend in me.

JUDAH. Vashti, dare you stay here? dare you face those who know you?

VASHTI (*looking at him*). With you, yes.

JUDAH. Let it be so. But I am not fit to lead. I resign my ministry, but we'll stay here and win back the trust and the respect of those who know us.

JOPP. Bravo!

[*Lady Eve runs on.*

LADY EVE (*comes down to Vashti*). Why didn't you tell me you were ready? Where are the deeds? Are they signed?

JUDAH. No, Lady Eve; there was a mistake in the title-deeds. The building-stones were not sound. There is to be no new church. (*Lady Eve shows great disappointment.*) Yes, we will build our new church with our lives, and its foundation shall be the truth.

CURTAIN

THE DANCING GIRL

A DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

To H. BEERBOHM TREE

My dear Tree:

In sending the sheets of "The Dancing Girl" through the press, I am forcibly reminded that the English drama has not remained stationary in the sixteen years that have passed since your production of this play.

I may perhaps be allowed to put your name on its first page, and to thank you for your most attractive impersonation of the Duke of Guisebury, and for your admirable stage management — especially for your striking arrangement of the end of the third act.

Faithfully yours,

HENRY ARTHUR JONES

April, 1907

"The Dancing Girl" was originally produced at the Haymarket Theatre, London, on January 15, 1891.

Original Cast

The Duke of Guisebury	Mr. Tree
Hon. Reginald Slingsby	Mr. F. Kerr
Augustus Cheevers	Mr. Batson
David Ives	Mr. Fernandez
John Christison	Mr. Fred Terry
Mr. Crake	Mr. Allan
Goldspink	Mr. Robb Harwood
Captain Leddra	Mr. Charles Hudson
Charles	Mr. Leith
Lady Bawtry	Miss Rose Leclercq
Lady Brislington	Miss Adelaide Gunn
Sybil Crake	Miss Norreys
Drusilla Ives	Miss Julia Neilson
Faith Ives	Miss Blanche Horlock
Mrs. Christison	Miss Ayrtoun
Mrs. Leddra	Mrs. E. H. Brooke
Sister Beatrice	Miss Hethcote

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I.

The Beautiful Pagan. Scene — The Isle of Saint Endellion.

(*Two years pass between Acts I and II.*)

ACT II.

Scene — Diana Valrose's Boudoir at Richmond.

(*Six months pass between Acts II and III.*)

ACT III.

The Last Feast. Scene — Reception-room at the Duke of Guisebury's town house, St. James' Park.

(*Two years pass between Acts III and IV.*)

ACT IV.

Same scene as Act I.

PERSONS REPRESENTED

The Duke of Guisebury.
The Hon. Reginald Slingsby.
David Ives.
John Christison.
Mr. Crake, the Duke's land agent.
Goldspink, the Duke's valet.
Captain Stephen Leddra.
Stephen Leddra, his son, a child.
Mr. Augustus Cheevers.
Lord Maitland.
Lord Brislington.
Sir Henry Drysdale.
Sir Lionel Baldwin.
Mr. Augustus Anstruther.
Mr. Vanstone.
Signor Poniatowski.
Charles, a footman.
James, a footman.
Drusilla Ives.
Faith Ives.
Sybil Crake.
Lady Bawtry, the Duke's aunt.
Mrs. Christison.
Mrs. Leddra.
Sister Beatrice.
Lady Poperoach.
Isabel Poperoach.
Lady Brislington.
Lady Maitland.
Lady Baldwin.
Miss Baldwin.
Miss Anstruther.
Fishermen, Tenants, Villagers, Guests, Children, etc.

THE DANCING GIRL

ACT I

THE BEAUTIFUL PAGAN

SCENE. *The Island of Saint Endellion, off the Cornish coast. At the back is a line of low rocks, and beyond, the sea. A pathway leads through the rocks down to the sea. On the right side of the stage is the Quakers' meeting-house, a plain square granite building, showing a door and two windows. The meeting-house is built on a low insular rock that rises some three or four feet above the stage; it is approached by pathways, leading up from the stage. On the left side of the stage, down towards the audience, is David Ives's house: another plain granite building, with a door down stage, and above the door, a window. The house is built into a cliff that rises above it. Beyond the house is a pathway that leads up the cliff and disappears amongst the rocks; on the left side towards the centre of the stage, a little to the right, is a piece of rock rising about two feet from the stage. Time, an autumn evening.*

John Christison discovered looking in at the window of David's house.

JOHN. Thou miracle of grace and beauty! Thou one desire of my heart! No! Grant me this, that loving her so much, I may ever love Thee more! Grant me that she may never come betwixt my soul and Thee!

[*Enter Faith from house. She is in Quaker dress; about twenty, very modest, pleased, timid.*

FAITH. You have left work early to-day, John?

JOHN. I can't work. These last few weeks my thoughts go astray, my hands rebel against me. My body 's down there at the breakwater, but my heart and spirit and soul are here — here in your house, Faith.

FAITH (*pleased, trembling, turns her head aside*). John!

JOHN. Is there any hope for me? Does she ever speak of me?

FAITH. She?

JOHN. Drusilla.

[*Faith turns quickly away from him, hides her face from him; after an effort, speaks in a quiet, unmoved tone.*

FAITH. How long have you loved her?

JOHN. Ever since she came back from London.

FAITH. Three weeks.

JOHN. It 's seven years if you measure it by the love I 've loved her with.

[*Drusilla passes the window inside cottage. Faith takes off a white silk scarf she has been wearing round her neck, and after a struggle, kisses it; then, hiding her feeling so far as she can, gives it to him.*

FAITH. John, I 've been forgetting all this while — this handkerchief has been a sore temptation to me since you gave it to me —

JOHN. Nay, it 's harmless.

FAITH. Nay, I 'm inclined to gauds and finery. Indeed my heart is full of vain thoughts. Take it back, John. You would not have it lead me away from heavenly things.

JOHN. What can I do with it? It 's a woman's belongings.

FAITH. Give it to Drusilla. She is more staid and thoughtful than I am. (*Very fervently.*) I hope she will love thee. Indeed she shall! It will be pleasant to have thee for a brother. Stay here! I'll bring her to thee.

[*Faith runs into the house. David Ives, a Quaker,*

about fifty, comes on. John is looking into cottage; he puts handkerchief into his pocket.

DAVID. You have come early to week-night meeting, John.

JOHN. The spirit moved me, David.

DAVID. Don't be ashamed, John. It is the spirit that moves young men towards maidens. Love does n't come from the Devil. The spirit moved me to wed the best mother of the best two maidens. — I must n't boast. Which is it, John? Faith or Drusilla?

JOHN (*after a shame-faced pause*). Drusilla.

DAVID (*a little surprised*). Drusilla? I thought it was likely to be Faith. Drusilla? You 've not seen her for seven years. She 's never been home here in Endellion except for a week or two at a time.

JOHN. But she 's grown so beautiful!

DAVID (*quickly*). Hold thy peace! Choose a wife for her beauty!

JOHN. Thy wife, her mother, was beautiful!

DAVID (*after a pause, very impressively*). Ay — and her goodness was of a piece with her beauty! I made an idol of her, and sometimes I think I was punished. She only lived three months after Faith's birth. (*A long deep sigh; then, having dismissed the subject, changes his tone.*) Drusilla! But she must go back to her situation in London —

JOHN. Let me persuade her to stay in Endellion.

DAVID. And keep her near me? You know how my heart has ached for her all the seven years she has been away from me! But I 've denied myself lest I should make an idol of her too, and she should be taken from me as her mother was. Besides, she 's happy in London, and she 's with godly people, though they 're not of our persuasion. John, why do you tempt me?

JOHN. You said just now, "Love does n't come from the Devil."

DAVID. Speak to her, John. Ask her to be your wife.

Not one word, good or bad, will I say. (*John grasps David's hand very warmly.*) But hold — times are bad, and Endellion is little better than a barren rock. There 's your dear mother to keep, and you 've set yourself a giant's task to build that breakwater. There 's years of work before you, and you must n't give it up, John.

JOHN. Give it up? Do you think I could ever forget that night, and my promise to my father?

DAVID. That 's right. A promise always binds — but a promise to a dying father binds seven times.

JOHN. I 'll never rest till the last stone is laid. But I could work with double the strength if Drusilla would wed me. I could keep her in comfort, David, and perhaps I could prevail with the Duke to give me some help.

[*Enter from house Faith and Drusilla. Drusilla is very beautiful, demure, dressed in Quaker fashion, but handsomely. They enter behind David and John, and come down unobserved.*

DAVID (*very scornfully*). The Duke! Trust no duke, lad! Trust to thine own right hand, and thy work shall stand sure and drive back the Atlantic. (*Scornfully.*) The Duke! Let him waste his substance in riotous living with his sinful companions! You 'll get no help from him! Leave him to dance to destruction with his dancing baggages — this what d 'ye call her? Some heathen name — Diana Valrose! —

(*Suddenly sees Drusilla, stops short, drops his voice.*) I was speaking of matters, my dear, that you know nothing of. John wants to speak with you. Weigh well what he says.

FAITH (*aside to John*). I 've said a good word for thee. She says she has no thought of marriage, but she will hear thee.

[*Exit Faith.*

DAVID (*calling into house*). Faith, get me a cup of tea —

and — (*glancing at himself*) — and I 'll give myself a wash for the week-night meeting.

(*Goes to door of house, glances round with great pride at Drusilla.*)

My firstling!

[*Exit into house. John goes to Drusilla, who stands very demurely, with eyes cast down on the ground; pause.*

DRUSILLA. Why dost thou not speak?

JOHN (*very much embarrassed, awkward, trembling, jerky in his utterance, does not look at her*). Thou art quite happy in London, Drusilla?

DRUSILLA. Alas, friend John, I am quite happy. And that is what makes me so sad.

JOHN. Sad because you are happy?

DRUSILLA. Yes, John, for to tell you the honest truth, I am not quite good and therefore I ought not to be quite happy — but alas! *I am.*

JOHN. I do not understand you.

DRUSILLA. That 's not strange, for I do not understand myself.

JOHN (*very earnestly*). Drusilla — could you live all your life in Endellion?

DRUSILLA. I could, John, but I do not think I should live very long.

JOHN. Why not?

DRUSILLA. I could not live in an island where they play harmoniums on Sunday afternoon.

JOHN (*embarrassed*). Then I may not ask you to —

DRUSILLA (*with cordial encouragement*). Ask me anything you please, friend John.

JOHN (*very hopeful*). Then, Drusilla — will you —?

DRUSILLA (*unconcerned, demure*). Will I live in Endellion? (*Considering.*) It is very healthy — Sarah Bazeley has lived to a hundred and two —

JOHN (*dubiously*). Yes —

DRUSILLA. But I should like to die while I am well-

favoured, and have all my wits, and teeth, and hair, because I should be very sorrowful hereafter without them.

JOHN. But wilt thou live in Endellion?

DRUSILLA. The air is soft and pleasant, and moreover all who live here must needs be very good.

JOHN. Why?

DRUSILLA. Because they have no means of falling into evil.

JOHN. It is indeed a favoured spot.

DRUSILLA. Ah, friend John, but what merit is there in goodness when it is forced? Now as I told thee, there is little goodness in me —

JOHN. Thou art all goodness! Oh, Drusilla, have pity on me!

[*Approaches her.*

DRUSILLA (*starts away from him*). Nay, but John, have pity on me!

[*Lifts up her foot.*

JOHN. What ails thee?

DRUSILLA. There is a stone in my slipper. It hurts me. (*John takes off her slipper.*) The shoemaker who made my slippers told me I had the prettiest foot in London. Is it not wicked of him to fill my heart with vanity?

JOHN (*kneeling still*). Have you found it?

DRUSILLA (*putting on slipper*). There is nothing in it.

JOHN (*suddenly, on his knees before her*). I love thee! Love me, or I shall die!

DRUSILLA. You are foolish!

[*Goes away from him, looking at him.*

JOHN (*rises, comes up to her with fierce passion*). I love thee! Wilt thou wed me?

DRUSILLA. I have not thought of it.

JOHN (*same tone as before*). I love thee! Wilt thou wed me?

[*Seizes her arm.*

DRUSILLA. You should not woo me so — you are too rough!

[*Withdraws her arm.*

JOHN. I know not how to woo — I love thee! Wilt thou wed me? Say me yea or nay.

DRUSILLA. I am sorry, friend John, but I must say thee nay. (*He looks at her.*) Indeed I mean it.

[*His hands drop with a despairing gesture; he stands quiet, hopeless, stricken, for a few seconds.*

JOHN (*very hopelessly*). If you ever want a man's love, you know where to find it.

[*Goes off very slowly, downcast, despairing.*

DRUSILLA (*sighs*). Poor fellow. (*Looking after him.*) He looked rather handsome! Should I —

[*Faith enters from house.*

FAITH. What answer have you given him? You will marry him?

DRUSILLA. No, indeed. I do not love him — and yet he looked very comely with his red and tanned face. Tell me, Faith — don't you love him yourself?

FAITH. No — at least, six weeks ago —

DRUSILLA. Tell me.

FAITH. I had never thought about any man — but when he returned from Penzance, he brought me a handkerchief and he took my hand that night, and looked at me a long while —

DRUSILLA. Go on.

FAITH. My heart beat very fast, and the next day when I saw him coming, I hid away from him — I was ashamed! Drusilla, have you never had thoughts of love?

DRUSILLA. Thoughts are like birds! They will come and roost!

FAITH. But in London — has no man tried to persuade you to love him?

DRUSILLA. One or two men have tried.

FAITH. You know *I* would tell *you everything.* Tell me everything about yourself. Do you love any man?

DRUSILLA. We are commanded to love *all* men.

FAITH. Yes, but with that *surpassing* love?

DRUSILLA. I do not think I could love any man with a *surpassing* love. And yet — (*yawns, stretches out her arms above her head, sighs*) — I don't know — if I could have a man after my own heart —

FAITH. A very good man —

DRUSILLA. A *perfect* man! I could love him — all a summer afternoon. (*Jumps up.*) Ah! We are talking foolishly. I wonder where John has gone.

(*Looking after John; meets Regy Slingsby, who enters. Regy is a modern, old-young man, about thirty-three, nearly bald. He shows great surprise at seeing Drusilla, stops dead — takes off his hat and bows. Drusilla looks at him unmoved.*)

Friend! Why dost thou look at me? I do not know thee.

(*Regy, disconcerted, stands hat in hand, looking at her.*)

Put on thy hat. Sunstrokes are frequent in Endellion, and when one has a weak place, it is foolish to expose it to injury.

REGY (*puts on his hat*). I beg pardon — I mistook you — I —

[*Laughs foolishly.*

DRUSILLA. Do not make that mistake again, friend. Come, Faith!

[*Takes Faith's arm, goes with her toward house; Regy is still staring.*

FAITH. A tourist! Why does he stare at you?

DRUSILLA. He thinks he knows me. It 's strange! So many folks make that mistake.

[*Exeunt Drusilla and Faith into house.*

REGY. Well, I — if it is n't her —

(*Goes up path; meets Duke of Guisebury, who enters; both exclaim "Hillo!"*)

Guise! Well, I am — What the devil —

GUISEBURY. Hush, Regy! You 're in the Island of En-

dellion, where bad language, scarlet fever, hydrophobia, and immorality have never entered.

REGY. But you 're here — and —

GUISEBURY. My yacht 's off that point. I 've only called in for a few hours, strictly *incog.*

REGY. *Incog?* I say, do you know who 's down here? (*Drusilla passes the window.*)

There — it is Diana Valrose!

GUISEBURY. Nonsense, Regy!

REGY. I 'll swear it is! And you down here too! It must be —

GUISEBURY. That young lady is Drusilla Ives — the eminently respectable Quaker daughter of one of my eminently respectable Quaker tenants. Now come — I 'll show you my new yacht.

REGY. No. If that *is n't* Diana Valrose, I shall try and get an introduction to her.

GUISEBURY. You 'll oblige me, Regy, by not noticing that lady.

REGY. Look here, Guise — own up. It is Diana — Miss Valrose — Why, I met her at your table.

GUISEBURY. Hush! The fact is she 's a native of this place.

REGY. How did you get to know her, then?

GUISEBURY. I 'll tell you. Her father sent her up to a situation in London, and five years ago she called on me, as her father's landlord, for a subscription to some charity affair. I saw she was two-thirds delightful Quaker innocence, and one-third the devil's own wit and mischief, so — I gave her the subscription!

REGY. And now?

GUISEBURY. Well, don't ask me any more, Regy. I 've been a confounded fool all through, but somehow — I can't help it. It 's a damned silly thing to say — I really love that woman!

REGY. But where did she get her style and tone from? Any one would think she was a lady.

GUISEBURY (*with meaning*). I 've never met, Regy, with any one who has presumed to think otherwise in my presence. She had the best masters. She astonished me with the amount of things she learnt, and the way she dropped the Quaker, and became — Well, she 's a Pagan! Three years ago she took a fancy to dancing. Last season she began dancing for some charities, and her long skirts took the town by storm. She got asked to lots of places, and — that 's the whole history of it, Regy.

REGY. And her people?

GUISEBURY. Oh, they think she 's in a situation in London. Most people believe what pleases them. It 's good for them. I never disturb a good, comfortable fiction — it 's against my conservative principles.

REGY. She 's made you dance to a pretty tune, Guise. House in Mayfair, race-horses, carriages, diamonds — what would it all tot up to, Guise? A hundred thousand pounds!

GUISEBURY. Perhaps. But she 's never bored me.

REGY. Can't you pull up?

GUISEBURY. What for? She 's never bored me.

REGY. Do you mean to let her ruin you?

GUISEBURY. Why not? She 's never bored me.

REGY. Not down in this hole?

GUISEBURY. Don't you go depreciating my property. I 've only just got here. She, like a dutiful daughter, took a fancy to visit her people, and I, like a dutiful landlord, took a fancy to visit my tenants. I have n't been to Endellion for eighteen years.

REGY. You 're a model landlord.

GUISEBURY. I am. I take two thousand a year from Endellion in rents, and I spend three in repairs, and keeping the sea out. What brings you to — this hole?

REGY. I wanted to get out of town, away from everybody — so I came here. The fact is, Guise — (*confidentially*) — I 've made a fool of myself!

GUISEBURY. What, again! The third time! After Bowler's cross-examination, and after those damages — as exemplary as your behaviour. (*Shaking his head.*) Regy, Regy, you 're a bad lot — bad lot, Regy!

REGY. No, no, old fellow. Not that — I 've been really going straight lately.

GUISEBURY. Ah, twice bit, once shy, I see! What silly mess have you got yourself into now?

REGY (*calmly*). I 'm engaged to be married.

[*The two men look at each other calmly for some seconds.*

GUISEBURY. *What, again!* (*Calmly.*) Who 's landed you?

REGY. One of the Poperoach girls — Isabel.

GUISEBURY. Isabel? Oh, yes. Tall girl, with large features, high cheek-bones, and a lot of wispy, straw-colored hair — eh?

REGY (*dubiously*). Yes. It *may* turn out all right, you know?

GUISEBURY. Think so?

REGY. Lady Poperoach has been trying to catch me all the season. I could see their game. Will you walk into my parlor? And in I walked. And the old woman slammed the door. And there it was staring at me in the Morning Post the next morning.

(*Looks very depressed; Guisebury laughs.*)

(*Piteously.*) Don't be hard on a fellow. Isabel 's got some good points — eh? (*Anxiously.*) What do you think of her? Really now — not bad, take her altogether?

GUISEBURY. I 'd rather take her in instalments!

REGY. It is n't Isabel so much as the old woman. Lady Poperoach does come the old soldier over everybody. It 's awful!

GUISEBURY. How is it you 're not on duty?

REGY. Well, as soon as it was all — you know — settled, I thought I should like to have a few days to myself

and think it over. So I got away — just — well, just to get used to the idea.

GUISEBURY (*benevolently*). Get used to it, Regy — don't hurry, but get used to it.

REGY (*valiantly*). Oh, I 'm in for it, and I mean to go through it like a man.

[*David enters.*

GUISEBURY (*to Regy*). One of my Quaker tenants. They don't know me — don't know I 'm in the island. Regy, here 's a chance of hearing an honest opinion of myself.

REGY. I say — (*Guisebury puts him away.*) Well, I 'm —

[*Exit Regy.*

GUISEBURY. Very charming spot, this Isle of Endellion!

DAVID. We 're highly favoured in many respects, friend.

GUISEBURY. Who 's the owner of this property?

[*Drusilla comes to door and listens.*

DAVID. Valentine Danecourt — His Grace the Duke of Guisebury and the Earl of St. Endellion, they call him.

GUISEBURY. Of course. You are highly favoured. A philanthropist, is n't he?

DAVID. I 've heard him called many names, but I 've never heard that title given to him.

GUISEBURY. Perhaps you don't know him.

DAVID. No, friend, but I have received a very evil report of him.

GUISEBURY. Ah! From the Radical papers!

DAVID. No, from his own actions. He wants no other accusers.

GUISEBURY. What particular shape does his infamy take?

DAVID. All shapes. A spendthrift, a libertine, a gambler with cards and horses.

GUISEBURY. The rascal! The damned rascal!

DAVID. Yes, friend. That 's a strong word to use, but it 's the right one!

GUISEBURY (*amused*). He has n't killed anybody, I suppose?

DAVID. Yes, he has.

GUISEBURY (*highly amused*). A murderer as well! (*Aside.*) I 'm getting on!

DAVID. The law would n't call it murder, but his conscience would, if he had one.

GUISEBURY. What do you mean?

DAVID. Two years ago, my friend Mark Christison was struck in the high tide, as he was trying to save his home from destruction. He died and his wife went out of her mind. What Valentine Danecourt wastes on his dancing creatures would have built a breakwater, and saved Mark Christison's life.

GUISEBURY (*aside*). He 's right. I am a blackguard! [*Stands thoughtful.*

DRUSILLA (*to her father*). Your tea 's ready, father!

GUISEBURY (*aside*). Di's father!

DRUSILLA. What have you been saying to the stranger?

DAVID. I 've been telling him my opinion of Valentine Danecourt.

DRUSILLA (*mischievously*). I hope you have been pleasantly entertained, friend.

GUISEBURY (*ironically*). Oh, most pleasantly.

DRUSILLA. In London where I live there is grievous talk of the Duke's misdeeds.

GUISEBURY. So there is in Endellion, it seems.

DAVID (*to Guisebury*). Do you know this Duke?

GUISEBURY. I have met him, but if he 's as bad as you say, I shall keep out of his way for the future.

DAVID. Aye, do, friend. Come, Drusilla.

[*Regy runs on.*

REGY. I say, Guisebury, old fellow —

DAVID (*turns sharply round*). Guisebury! Guisebury! Go indoors, Drusilla! (*Exit Drusilla into house. David turns to Guisebury.*) Then you are Valentine Danecourt, yourself?

GUISEBURY. At your service.

DAVID (*after a pause*). I suppose I may take a year's notice to quit my house and land.

GUISEBURY. Not at all. I 'm a very bad landlord, Mr. Ives, but you 're a very good tenant. I 'm glad to have heard your candid opinion of me.

DAVID. You 're quite welcome.

GUISEBURY. I regret to say that all you have said of me is quite true. I am a thoroughly bad lot, and the worst of it is there 's not the least chance of my reformation. However, if you want any repairs doing, my agent, Crake, is down here with me — let him know and they shall be done.

DAVID. Thank you.

GUISEBURY. And in the meantime, friend Ives, as I never knew Mr. Christison, have no precise knowledge of high tides, and was at Monte Carlo at the time of his death, I think you may stretch a point in my favour and call it manslaughter for the future — eh, friend?

DAVID (*seriously*). Harkee, friend — Remember your promise — Keep out of the Duke of Guisebury's way for the future. You 'll be wise.

[*Exit David into house.*

REGY. I 'm afraid I 've put my foot in it again!

GUISEBURY. What made you blurt out my name when I told you I was here *incog?*

REGY. I 'm awfully sorry, old fellow. Hallo! Here 's what 's-his-name.

[*Enter Crake, the Duke's steward and land agent; about fifty.*

GUISEBURY. Here 's Crake — you know Crake?

CRAKE (*a little surprised on seeing Regy*). Mr. Slingsby, how d' ye do?

REGY. I 'm not very well.

CRAKE. I saw the joyful news in the Morning Post.

REGY (*sheepishly*). Yes. It 's the right sort of thing to do, eh, Crake?

(*Crake does not reply.*)

No, but candidly, Crake — after a fellow's knocked about for a great many years as I have, there comes a time when he thinks, "I 'm having a jolly good time of it now, but who 's going to nurse me and take care of me when I get into the sere and yellow leaf?" A man must look at it a little in that light.

[*Crake goes up a little. Sybil Crake enters; an odd, elfin girl, about twenty, lame, with crutches, very bright, sprightly, alert; she hops on, comes up to Guisebury. Guisebury's manner toward her is protecting, something like a master to a favourite dog.*

GUISEBURY. Well, Midge, what have you been doing?

SYBIL. Wishing I was a millionaire, or a bricklayer, or a horsewhip.

GUISEBURY. Why?

SYBIL. If I were a millionaire, I could build that breakwater; if I were a bricklayer, I could help poor young Christison build it; if I were a horsewhip, I might whip all the people who brought you up, and between them spoiled a good man in the making.

CRAKE (*very reprovingly*). Sybil! Sybil!

GUISEBURY. I 've spoiled myself, Midge.

SYBIL (*hops across to Regy*). Mr. Slingsby, how are you?

REGY. I 'm not very well.

SYBIL. I 've heard some good news about you.

REGY. Yes? She 's rather a jolly girl, you know. Very good at repartee.

GUISEBURY. That 's an awkward talent in a wife, Regy.

REGY. Look here, Guise, you need n't choke me off; I 'm in for it now, and I 'm going to try it! It may not suit me, but I 'm going to try it!

GUISEBURY. Very well, Regy — try it! Come and dine with me on my yacht. We 'll make it half-past eight, to give you plenty of time.

REGY. All right. See you at dinner, Guise. (*Pite-*

ously.) I knew I was putting my foot in it.

[*Exit very despondent.*

GUISEBURY. Well, Crake, what's to be done with this confounded island?

CRAKE. Take your rents while you can, and then let the island pitch headforemost into the sea.

SYBIL. And then let the people pitch headforemost into the sea after it.

CRAKE. The people must move on.

SYBIL. But they love their homes — is n't it senseless of them?

CRAKE. My dear Sybil, this is a practical question.

SYBIL. Yes, I've been talking with the fishermen's wives — they're horribly practical. What do you think? They want to keep a roof over their children.

GUISEBURY. Can't something be done, Crake?

CRAKE. Your Grace! I would prefer not to speak of your affairs.

[*Glances at Sybil.*

GUISEBURY. Oh, Midge knows I'm a pauper. Go on.

CRAKE. This breakwater would cost fifty thousand pounds at least. Indeed you can't possibly raise the money.

SYBIL. Oh, that need n't stand in your way — it never has.

(*Enter Captain and Mrs. Leddra, villagers, tenants, and children.*)

Here are some of your tenants coming to meeting. That's Captain Leddra and his wife. I wish you knew your tenants.

GUISEBURY. Introduce me.

SYBIL. May I? Captain Leddra, Mrs. Leddra — here is the Duke of Guisebury come to pay you a visit.

[*General surprise.*

LEDDRA (*a bronzed seafarer*). The Duke! (*Comes to Guisebury.*) You're welcome, your Grace! We've been looking out for you for the last dozen years or so.

We thought you'd forgotten there was such a place as Endellion.

GUISEBURY. No, Captain Leddra — I've not forgotten Endellion, and if I can do anything for the island —

LEDDRA. If you've a mind to do anything for us, your Grace, you must be quick about it. We're at our wits' ends! The sea's washing us away!

[*David Ives comes to door of house.*

CRAKE. But can't you find employment elsewhere?

LEDDRA. Oh, yes, Mr. Crake, there's plenty of employment at the North Pole.

CRAKE. The North Pole?

LEDDRA. We've been offered berths with this new Arctic Expedition that Captain Curvengen is fitting out at Plymouth. He sails next spring. It's a desperate venture, but we shall have to go.

SYBIL. Yes, you'll leave all your bones at the North Pole, but there'll be two hundred pounds apiece for your widows. And you'll have snow for a shroud, and an iceberg for a hearse and white bears for undertakers — so there'll be no funeral expenses.

MRS. LEDDRA (*with a cry, clings to her husband*). You shan't go, Steve — you shan't go!

LEDDRA. Let be, Hester. What's the use of staying here? I will go, I tell you, woman, unless — unless I happen to get killed first, as Mark Christison was!

MRS. LEDDRA. Hush!

[*Mrs. Christison, a white-haired old peasant woman, comes on, very gentle, dreamy, absorbed.*

GUISEBURY. Who's this?

SYBIL. Mark Christison's widow. She's mad! You need n't take any notice of her.

MRS. CHRISTISON (*to David*). Is there any news from Mark yet, David?

DAVID. No, Rachel, there's no news yet.

MRS. CHRISTISON. It's unkind of him not to write to me.

(*Seeing Guisebury.*) A stranger gentleman! I beg your pardon, friend. Do you come from London? (*Guisebury nods.*) My husband, Mark Christison, has gone up there to ask the Duke to help him. Mark 's left me for two years, and he never writes to me. I know he has n't forgotten me, because when man and wife love as we loved, there 's never any forgetting on either side of the grave.

SYBIL (*watching Guisebury*). She 's mad. You need n't take any notice of her.

GUISEBURY. I have n't met your husband, Mrs. Christison, but I believe he 's well — quite well.

[*Takes her hand kindly, with a soothing gesture.*

MRS. CHRISTISON. Thank you, friend. The Duke may be keeping him in London. It 's week-night meeting. I 'm going to pray for him to come back.

(*Guisebury gives her his hand with great courtesy and leads her towards the meeting-house.*)

I pray, and I pray, and I pray, but he never comes.

SYBIL. You might say a good word for the Duke while you 're about it, Mrs. Christison. They tell me he needs it more than your husband.

MRS. CHRISTISON. Yes, I 'll say a good word for the Duke.

[*Exit into meeting-house.*

GUISEBURY (*sharply*). Crake!

(*John Christison re-enters; Faith and Drusilla come to cottage door.*)

Send for an engineer from London, get him to prepare plans, and give me an estimate for a breakwater that will protect all the southwest coast of the island.

CRAKE (*deprecatingly*). Your Grace — it 's madness — it 's impossible!

GUISEBURY. Yes, Crake, I know it 's impossible, but it 's going to be done. Captain Leddra, you and your friends may remain in the bosom of your families instead of trying to climb the legendary North Pole. (*General hurrahs.*) I 'm glad you have such excellent

lungs. But you 'd better save your shouts till the breakwater is built.

JOHN (*comes eagerly forward*). Your Grace, I want to thank you. My name 's John Christison. I promised my father when he was dying that if you did nothing, I would build the breakwater with my own hands. Oh! it 's weary work! For as fast as we lay one stone upon the other, the tide and storm dash them to pieces. My courage is well-nigh spent, but if you will lend me some men and money, I 'll begin again with a new heart, and please God, the work shall prosper in our hands. You 'll help me, Duke — you 'll help me?

GUISEBURY. Certainly, Mr. Christison. I shall be very glad of your advice and assistance. We will consider the building of this breakwater as our joint enterprise, and you shall be my overlooker at a salary of two hundred pounds a year.

JOHN. Thank you, Duke. You do mean it! You 'll go through with it?

GUISEBURY. I keep my word, Mr. Christison. It 's a habit of mine, and I give you my word of honour I'll build that breakwater.

JOHN. Forgive me, your Grace! I don't doubt you. I can't thank you. Ah! But I 'll ask a blessing for you from the place that used to be my father's.

[*Goes quickly up to the meeting-house door.*

DRUSILLA (*quiet, seductive*). Shall I come with you, friend John?

JOHN (*eagerly*). Will you? If you would help me, I could work like a giant!

DRUSILLA. Perhaps I will. Come!

[*They go into meeting-house, Faith watching them.*

FAITH (*aside*). She does not love him, yet she makes him love her.

[*Looks after them in the meeting-house, and goes in.*

MRS. LEDDRA. My blessings on you too, your Grace. (*To her child.*) There, Stephen, look at him, and remember

him all your life! He saved your father from going to his grave up there in the ice and snow! Yes, that you have! (*Hysterically.*) You 've saved my husband's life!

GUISEBURY (*very much amused*). Midge, I've *saved* a man's life!

SYBIL. Why don't you save your own?

GUISEBURY (*turns to Mrs. Leddra, who is sobbing*). Come, my dear lady, bear up! If your husband's life is saved, you need n't indulge in this violent sorrow about it.

MRS. LEDDRA (*unsuspectingly*). Sorrow! Your Grace, I 'm beside myself with joy! Oh, your Grace, I 've had no peace since Steve threatened to go! I've had such dreams — oh, your Grace! May you never have such dreams as I 've had!

GUISEBURY. I trust not! I trust not!

LEDDRA (*she is sobbing on his shoulder*). There! There! Hold your peace, Hester! Don't take any notice of her, your Grace. She can't help it! She 's only a woman, and she 's fond of me and the children — that 's what makes her so foolish — she 's fond of me — that 's what it is. Your Grace — our best hearty thanks.

[*The people have gradually gone into the meeting-house.*

LEDDRA (*going into the meeting-house with David*). Well, David, what do you think of his Grace's promise?

DAVID. His promise! (*Looks at Guisebury.*) Wait and see whether he keeps it!

[*All the people have gone into the meeting-house, leaving Guisebury, Crake, and Sybil.*

GUISEBURY (*watching the people as they go into the meeting-house*). Poor devils! They take life very seriously!

SYBIL. Three-fourths of the world do, that the other fourth may see what a splendid jest it is!

CRAKE. Duke, will you follow me into figures?

GUISEBURY. I'd rather not — anywhere but there, Crake. Arithmetic is so relentless.

CRAKE. Your Grace, excuse my putting it plainly — if you build this breakwater, you'll beggar yourself.

GUISEBURY. My good Crake, what is a landlord for, except to beggar himself for his tenants? I know my duty, Crake. I very rarely *do* it, but I yield to no man in *knowing* it!

CRAKE. Will you tell me how the money is to be raised?

GUISEBURY. That's what I want you to do. You shall have a bottle of my grandfather's port at dinner to-night, and then *you* shall tell *me* how it is to be raised. Go and take another look at the place, and see what this young Christison has been doing.

[*Sybil, who has been up stage, hops down to Guisebury.*

CRAKE (*going off*). If I'd been wise I should have left him ten years ago; but I suppose I shall be fool enough to stay till the smash comes.

[*Exit Crake.*

SYBIL. I want to ask you a question.

GUISEBURY. Well?

SYBIL. Why are you such a hypocrite?

GUISEBURY. Am I a hypocrite?

SYBIL. Yes. You pretend to be a great deal worse than you are.

GUISEBURY. Most people pretend to be a great deal better than they are, so somebody must restore the moral balance. But you don't know what a bad fellow I am, Midge.

SYBIL. Yes, I do. You *are* bad — but you aren't half so bad as you think you are. I've found you out in lots of good deeds, and you always do them and seem ashamed of them. You're kind; you're truthful; you don't slander anybody — except yourself — and you are brave.

GUISEBURY. Brave — am I?

SYBIL. If you hadn't been brave, you wouldn't have

rushed in and picked me from under the horses' feet ten years ago: you would have let them trample me to death instead of only laming me for life, and curdling my wits.

GUISEBURY. They were my horses, and it was my infernal groom that put you behind them. I could n't stop myself — it was mere impulse — and sometimes I 've asked myself whether it was a kindness to save you.

[*Looking at her crutches.*

SYBIL. What does it matter? I don't mind it. At least, so long as people don't pity me. At first I used to lie all night and beat my fists against the wall in agony. But now —

GUISEBURY. Now?

SYBIL. Now I 've found out that the world was not constructed for the sole purpose of making me happy. And besides, perhaps some day I shall pull *you* out from under the horses' feet.

GUISEBURY. What horses?

SYBIL. Don't you know? Can't you see where you are driving?

GUISEBURY. No.

SYBIL. Why not pull up?

GUISEBURY. I can't, Midge. I 've got my life into a horrible mess, and it 's too much bother to get it straight now.

SYBIL. Does n't your conscience plague you sometimes?

GUISEBURY. No. I suppose I 've got a conscience, but it 's rusty — the works have stopped. What does it matter? The world was n't constructed for the sole purpose of making me good.

SYBIL. Suppose life should be serious after all!

GUISEBURY. My dear Midge, don't preach at me!

SYBIL. I won't; preaching won't tame wild horses. (*Hops up the cliff.*) I 'll wait till they 're trampling you under their feet.

[*Exit Sybil.*

GUISEBURY (*looks after her, turns round, fills pipe*). Suppose life should be serious after all! What a jest it would be!

[*Drusilla creeps out of meeting-house.*

DRUSILLA. Guise!

GUISEBURY. What mischief now?

DRUSILLA. Catch me!

GUISEBURY. Come then!

[*She jumps into his arms.*

DRUSILLA. Oh, I 'm so glad you 've come! I 've had three awful weeks! These people are so good, and so stupid! They 'll kill me! I 'm simply dying of goodness. Two more ounces of goodness, and I 'm dead!

GUISEBURY. Don't be alarmed!

DRUSILLA. You 'll catch it! It 's in the air. The long faces they pull, the dresses they wear, the way they talk, the books they read — oh, so good! oh, so stupid! And the things they think sinful! Living is sinful! Loving is sinful! Breathing is sinful! Eating and drinking are sinful! Flowers are sinful! Everything is sinful! Oh, so good! Oh, so stupid! And the time they give to their prayers, and their harmoniums! There 's an epidemic of harmoniums! And the way they spend their Sundays! Oh, so good! Oh, so stupid! How 's everything and everybody in London? What have you been doing with yourself? Have you missed me? Have you brought my dear old Bully Boy?

GUISEBURY. Yes, I 've brought the dog. He 's fond of me.

DRUSILLA. Guise — what 's the matter with you?

GUISEBURY. Nothing. Tell me what *you 've* been doing *with yourself*.

DRUSILLA. Going to meeting; pulling a long face; chaffing my father and sister up my sleeve; wondering how on earth they came to be my father and sister; boring myself; sighing a little for you — not much, and mak-

ing that boy John Christison fall madly in love with me.

GUISEBURY. You should n't do that.

DRUSILLA. Should n't make people fall in love with me? Oh, I must.

GUISEBURY. You should remember —

DRUSILLA. What?

GUISEBURY (*with much quiet tenderness*). How deeply I 'm attached to you.

DRUSILLA. So 's John Christison! And he can make love — in his way. You can't make love as he does.

GUISEBURY. The devil take John Christison!

DRUSILLA. Ah, you 're jealous! You need n't be! But are you attached to me, Guise?

GUISEBURY. Am I attached to you? I met you, Di, when I was thirty. If you 'd been another sort of woman, Di, I should have been another sort of man. I wonder what my life would have been without you?

DRUSILLA. Very dull. You 've bought me that yacht?

GUISEBURY. Yes. Have you ever had a wish, a caprice that I have n't gratified? Have n't I done every mad thing that you asked me?

DRUSILLA (*putting flower in his coat*). Suppose for once I asked you to do something sensible?

GUISEBURY. Well?

DRUSILLA (*after a pause, drops her eyes, then glances up at him furtively*). I read in one of the weekly papers that I am to be the Duchess of Guisebury.

GUISEBURY (*startled*). My dear Di, don't be absurd!

DRUSILLA. I read it in the paper, Guise. Why is it absurd? I 've been thoroughly educated. I 've been asked to several very good houses. And then my family — sound Quaker stock on both sides for two hundred years — you could n't have better breeding than that! And no cosmetics but the sea and wind! Guise, I could play the part to perfection!

GUISEBURY. My dear child, don't ask for the one thing I cannot give you.

DRUSILLA. You won't? Very well— (*Bites her lip.*) Heigho!

(*Guisebury stands, looking glum and thoughtful.*) What 's the matter with you? What makes you so serious?

GUISEBURY. Suppose life should be serious after all!

DRUSILLA. Don't suppose anything so dreadful. They 'll be coming out of meeting soon. (*Creeps up to meeting-house door, looks in.*) Oh, the Captain is preaching! That means forty minutes at least! And on such a lovely moonlight night too!

(*John creeps stealthily out of the meeting-house door and hides behind a shrub.*)

I 've been practising a new dance, a shadow dance. Shall I show you?

[*Drusilla carefully looks all round, takes up her skirts, gives one or two turns, catches sight of John's face watching her through the shrubs, and stops suddenly.*

JOHN (*advancing*). Woman! What art thou? !

CURTAIN

(*Two years pass between Acts I and II.*)

ACT II

THE BROKEN BOWL

SCENE. *Diana Valrose's boudoir at Richmond. A very elegantly furnished room, with light, pretty furniture.*

Discover Drusilla in handsome morning dress arranging flowers in large china bowl. Enter Footman, announcing Mr. Christison. Enter John. Exit Footman.

DRUSILLA. Well, friend John!

JOHN. Your father and Faith are in London.

DRUSILLA. I know — they 've written to me.

JOHN. They 're searching everywhere for you. I 've been with them the last three days pretending to help them find you, throwing them off your track — deceiving them, lying, lying at every step.

DRUSILLA. How kind and thoughtful of you!

JOHN. Kind and thoughtful!

DRUSILLA. To me and to them. It would pain them to know the truth about me. My father and sister do not understand me.

JOHN. Who does understand you? I don't. What made you bring me up to London? Why have you kept me here for nearly two years — feeding me with false hopes and promises — making me eat the bread of idleness and deceit, till there is n't a sound place in me? Why have you done it? Why? — You do not love me!

DRUSILLA (*very seductive*). How do you know that I do not love you, friend John?

JOHN. Love me! Oh, it would be horrible! It would be past grace and mercy for you and me to love each

other after — this. (*Looking round the room.*) After all — after what I know of you. And yet — (*Coming up to her, fiercely seizing her hands.*) Do you love me?

DRUSILLA. You 've never gone the right way to make me love you. I like you — when you 're not in one of these moral fits. When you 're moral, you 're dull and tiresome, friend John! You are really. Why don't you take things more quietly? What harm has been done?

JOHN. What harm? How have I passed my time since I left Endellion?

DRUSILLA. You came to London to superintend the plans for the breakwater, and the Duke appointed you overlooker at two hundred a year.

JOHN. I 've taken the money, and I 've not done one hour's work for it. I 've lied to my dead father! I 've broken my promise to him!

DRUSILLA. You mean you have n't kept it at present. There 's plenty of time.

JOHN. Yes — there 's plenty of time to repent — hereafter!

DRUSILLA. Friend John, you are very foolish — why should you trouble yourself? Tell me about my father and Faith.

JOHN. They are terribly distressed bceause they cannot find you. Your father seems broken-hearted.

DRUSILLA. Why could n't they stay at Endellion! The climate and the meeting-house suited them so well! (*Comes up to him, puts her hand on his shoulder, caressingly.*) Friend John, I want you to do me a little favour.

JOHN. What?

DRUSILLA. Persuade them there has been some mistake, and get them quietly back to Endellion. When they are at home I 'll write and explain everything to my father. I 'll find some good excuse — He 'll believe

me! For the sake of old times, John. It will be kind to spare them anxiety about me. I 'm really not so bad as you think me — I 'm really not indeed — Will you, John?

JOHN. You know I shall do whatever you ask me!

DRUSILLA. Thank you, friend John. (*Guisebury passes the window.*) Here's the Duke!

JOHN. I want to see him.

DRUSILLA. Very well, I 'll leave you to him. And, John, you 'll tell them some pretty little fairy tale, and get them comfortably off home, eh?

JOHN. I 'll keep up the lies now I 've begun them. Oh, I 'm lost anyhow.

DRUSILLA. Yes, friend John, we are lost! But never mind — we shall be in very good company!

[*Exit Drusilla.*

JOHN. If I could break off your chains! If I could!

[*Enter Guisebury.*

GUISEBURY. Ah, Mr. Christison!

JOHN. Your Grace, I wish to speak about the salary you 've allowed me.

GUISEBURY. The last quarter has n't been paid.

JOHN. I don't want your money. I 'm sorry I took it.

GUISEBURY. Why?

JOHN. I 've not earned it.

GUISEBURY. That 's a very absurd reason for not taking it, Mr. Christison. However, I 'll respect your scruples. You need n't be under any further apprehension about being paid. Is there anything else?

JOHN. Yes! Two years ago you spoke of beginning the breakwater at Endellion, and I was to work under you and for you. There 's not a stone been laid since. I don't understand your feelings — but I know what my own are every night as I lay my head upon my pillow and think, "Another day gone, and I 've done nothing to redeem my promise." I thought perhaps your feelings might be something like mine.

GUISEBURY (*touched*). You're right, Mr. Christison! I've allowed two years to go by, and I've done nothing to keep my word! You're right! And I've sacrificed those men's lives!

JOHN. Are you sure they've perished?

GUISEBURY. They've given up all hope at the Admiralty. You've nothing to say, Mr. Christison?

JOHN. No, Duke. As soon as I am able, I shall go back to Endellion and get on with the work as well as I can. I shan't trouble your Grace any further about it.

GUISEBURY. Very well, Mr. Christison.

[*Rings bell.*

JOHN. Your Grace, David Ives is in London.

GUISEBURY. Indeed!

(*Exit John. Guisebury alone, takes several turns about the room, his walk, mien and gesture indicate supreme self-contempt; his eyes on floor, bites his thumb, kicks the footstool savagely, sits on sofa; finds the cushion uncomfortable, pitches it about, reclines again; finds it still more uncomfortable, pitches it to the other end of the room and breaks an old China bowl, which drops in pieces and falls on floor.*)

I suppose there is some poor devil somewhere that's in a worse all-round mess than I am! But if there is, I should like to shake hands with him, and ask him how he feels.

(*Gets up savagely, walks across the room, walks into back room, looks out of window.*)

Hillo, Bully Boy—what is it, old chap?

(*Opens the French window; admits a ferocious looking, ugly bulldog.*)

Come in, old boy! Sit up there! I like you, Bully Boy! There's a splendid absence of all moral squeamishness about that ugly old mug of yours! Birds of a feather, eh, old boy? I'm a bad lot, but you don't mind that, do you? (*Caressing the dog.*) You love me, don't you, as much as if I were a paragon

pattern of all the virtues. I'm in a devilish scrape, Bully Boy! I've come nearly to the end of my tether! I broke my word to those poor beggars! I let them join that cursed Arctic expedition, and there they are, up there, making a cold supper for the Polar Bears! How would you feel, Bully Boy, if you had sent a dozen poor beggars to Kingdom Come? You wouldn't mind, would you? And why should I? I've ruined myself for her, Bully Boy, and now she's growing tired of me! Strange, isn't it! A few shillings will buy a faithful dog, but all the money in the world won't buy a faithful woman!

[*Enter Servant announcing Mr. Slingsby. Regy enters. Servant then goes up and takes the dog.*

GUISEBURY. Well, Regy, this is a surprise!

REGY. Yes. They told me you called the other day, but I wasn't at home, so as I was driving by to-day I thought I'd give you a look-up.

GUISEBURY. Thanks. (*To servant, who is going off with dog.*) Where are you taking that dog?

SERVANT. I beg pardon, your Grace, Miss Valrose said he was to be sent up to town.

GUISEBURY. Oh, very well, I'll take him back to town with me to-night. Poor Bully Boy! She's getting tired of you too, is she?

[*Exit servant with dog.*

REGY. Well, Guise, what have you been doing with yourself all the while?

GUISEBURY. Playing the fool, and scandalizing society.

REGY. Did you see that article in yesterday's Trafalgar Square Gazette on "The Decline of our Aristocracy"? They did give it you hot.

GUISEBURY. Ah! I met the editor a few months ago, and he assured me that, when he writes about the blackguard Duke, our differences are — like Satan and Michael's — merely political! What did the article say of me?

[*Sits on sofa.*

REGY. That the spectacle of your career has hastened the downfall of the House of Lords by twenty years.

GUISEBURY. Well. What more do the Radicals want? And yet they've never given me a testimonial! What have you been doing with yourself, Regy?

[*Regy rises solemnly with the air of making a most important communication, takes off hat, goes to him.*

REGY (*Very solemnly*). Guise — I tell you this — things are coming to a crisis.

GUISEBURY. Yes, Regy. I've lived in one chronic crisis ever since I left Eton! Why don't you ask her to name the day, and get it all over?

REGY. Not if I know it. While there's life there's hope — and Lady Poperoach (*with a mysterious, threatening manner*) had better not drive me to bay! That's my candid advice to Lady Poperoach — "Don't drive me to bay!"

GUISEBURY. What should you do, Regy?

REGY. Well, don't let Lady Poperoach drive me to bay, that's all! — Guise, if I ask you a plain, straightforward question, will you give me a plain, straightforward answer?

GUISEBURY. Rely on me, Regy.

REGY. Will you tell me what the devil I wanted to go and tie myself up to Isabel Poperoach for? That's what I want to know. I'd everything I wanted — nicest little bachelor's quarters in London, nobody to bully-rag me, or order me about — What did I do it for?

GUISEBURY. Well, why did you?

REGY. Because I was a silly fool — that's why! There's no other reason.

GUISEBURY. Well — that seems sufficient.

REGY (*continuing, taking no notice of Guisebury*). Some people want to get married — very well, let them! Let them go in and get married forty times over! I

don't interfere with them! Why should I be dragged like a victim to the slaughter?

GUISEBURY. Just so, Regy — why should you?

REGY. It 's hard lines on a fellow, is n't it, Guise? It 's devilish hard lines! What would you advise me to do?

GUISEBURY. I should get married.

REGY (*disgusted*). Get married! Oh, hang it all, Guise — I did n't expect this from you! No, candidly, what would you advise me to do? Eh?

GUISEBURY (*yawns*). I should not get married.

REGY (*shakes hands with him*). Thank you old fellow, thank you. I knew I might rely on you. But — I say — how am I to get out of it, eh?

GUISEBURY. That 's it, Regy! How are we to get out of it?

REGY. You! You have n't been and landed yourself!

GUISEBURY. Yes, in no end of a mess! Debts, difficulties, duns, unfulfilled engagements everywhere — all the Danecourt property under water with these floods — no rents — no money — no self-respect — no nothing!

REGY (*cheerfully*). Poor old Guise! I 'm awfully sorry for you, I am indeed. But — I say, Guise, what am I to do?

GUISEBURY. Why not marry her? It could n't be worse than the life we 've lived for the last fifteen years! The other Saturday night I sat in that big house of mine alone till I felt that, if I stayed five minutes longer, I should get out my pistols and blow my brains out. Well, I went out, and I got amongst some people marketing — I watched some little cad and his wife buying their Sunday's dinner with four squalling, snub-nosed brats hanging round them! He was happy — that little cad! I wonder what grudge Providence had against me to give me a title and thirty thousand a year, instead of making me a greasy little cad like that!

REGY (*supremely occupied with his own concerns*). What I ask myself is this — what 's the object of my getting married? That 's what I want to know! Where does the joke come in? What shall I have to show for it?

GUISEBURY. What have we both got to show for it as it is? That little cad had his wife and children's love, and his shoulder of mutton and his onions. And he *was happy!*

REGY. Happy be hanged! All women are alike!

GUISEBURY. That 's the last cursed word of cynicism. All women are alike. And the devil of it is — it 's true! That is, it 's true for such men as you and I. (*With a chuckle.*) My God, Regy, what a farce of a world it is!

REGY. It is, old boy. But I stick to my Goschens — oh dear, yes! I 've got a nice little fifteen thousand a year, dear old fellow — just keeps me going. But I say, old fellow, what 's the matter with you?

GUISEBURY. Everything. Crake has left me. She 's tired of me. And those poor beggars who went with that fool Curgenven to find the North Pole — they 're lost, Regy!

REGY. Well, what the devil could they expect? Suppose they do find the North Pole — what the deuce is the good of it? It 's no business of yours.

GUISEBURY. I never missed a night's sleep in my life till lately. Now, every night, just as I 'm falling off, my heart gives a kind of a start. Perhaps I doze off again for a few minutes. Another start — and then — I 'm wide awake and going through every detail of the Arctic expedition. Up to 83 North, going all through the plans for the Endellion breakwater — and there I lie, hour after hour, night after night, just the same! And when at last I drop off, they 're at me again — thousands and thousands of poor lank, starved wretches with their faces all grey and pinched like corpses; and their limbs dropping off

with gangrene and frostbite, hanging over me in my sleep.

REGY. Put on your hat, dear old boy, and go to a doctor.

GUISEBURY. I've been. Gave me sleeping draughts. Chloral, opium — I took them — tumblerfulls of them. No good. Ordered me abroad. I went. No good. I've tried drink. I've tried everything. It's no good, Regy my boy. My heart, or my liver, or my conscience or some damned thing inside of me is all wrong, and I don't know how the devil to get it right!

REGY (*looks at him half-critically, half-compassionately*). Let me tell you this, my dear old Guise — you'd better take care of yourself. You're in a bad way.

GUISEBURY. I know I am. I never bothered myself about duty and conscience and all that grandmother's stuff, but I'm damned, Regy, if I don't begin to think there's something in it after all!

REGY (*cheerfully*). Wish I could help you, dear old fellow — upon my word I do. If there's anything I can do for you —

GUISEBURY. You know, Regy, there are really a great many natural resources in Endellion; and if any thorough good-hearted fellow would advance the money, and would take a small risk, I believe the thing would pay itself back in a few years. I want to keep my word, Regy! It would make a new man of me. I wouldn't take a shilling for myself. It's for those poor beggars. You don't happen to know any thorough good fellow who would put his hand in his pocket, eh?

REGY. Oh, I'd do it myself for you with pleasure, dear old fellow, but when I said just now fifteen thousand a year, I didn't mean fifteen thousand clear. The fact is, when the charges on the estate are paid, it's not much over six, and I've got so many calls. In

fact my life's nothing but one eternal monotonous fork out, fork out, fork out!

(*Enter Servant, announcing Mr. and Miss Crake; enter Crake and Sybil. Regy takes out his watch suddenly.*)

By Jove! I had to be back in Piccadilly at five! Ta, ta, old fellow, ta, ta. If I can be of any use to you, you let me know. (*To Crake and Sybil as he passes them.*) How d' ye do? How d' ye do?

[*Exit Regy very hurriedly.*

CRAKE. You received my note, your Grace?

GUISEBURY. Yes, Crake. (*Shakes hands.*) Ah, Midge, you have n't forsaken me, then?

SYBIL. No, I always come to your funerals. I followed your character when it went to its early grave; and when you broke your word and buried your self-respect — (*Guise winces*) — I was the chief mourner. To-day we are going to bid farewell to the remains of your fortune; and when the little that is left of you goes to its last home, I 'm sure I shall be following.

GUISEBBURY. But don't shed one tear over me, Midge — I 'm not worth it.

[*Takes her hand.*

SYBIL. No. (*Looking at bowl.*) You 've had a smash here!

[*Goes up to the broken china bowl, picks up the pieces, and all through the interview is trying to put them together.*

GUISE (*in a sharp quick tone*). Now, Crake, let 's get this over.

CRAKE. Your Grace, I don't want to prolong it. It 's a bitter day for me. (*Takes out bunch of keys.*) There 's the strong room; that 's the jewels; those are the deed boxes at the Bank. I 've been through everything with the new steward. I hope your Grace does n't blame me?

GUISEBURY. No, Crake.

CRAKE. I advised your Grace for the best.

GUISEBURY. You did, Crake.

CRAKE. There's nothing else, your Grace?

GUISEBURY. Nothing. I've already thanked you for your faithful service. I wish I had deserved it better.

[*Gives his hand.*

CRAKE (*moved*). Don't say any more, your Grace.

(*The two men stand with hands clasped for some moments. Crake speaks with great feeling, very low tone of voice.*) Good-day, your Grace.

GUISEBURY. Good-bye, Crake.

[*Shakes hands very cordially.*

CRAKE. Come, Sybil.

[*Leaves the room hurriedly, much affected. Guise stands despondent.*

SYBIL (*occupied with the vase*). Yes — it's smashed all to pieces; but you can put it together again.

GUISEBURY. What?

SYBIL. This bowl. (*Leaves it, hops down to him.*) And your life.

(*Guise shrugs his shoulders, shakes his head sadly.*) Yes! Look! Of course it will never be the same again, but it will hold together. Oh, why don't you pick up the pieces?

GUISEBURY. Too late!

SYBIL. No! Try — try — Pick up the pieces!

GUISEBURY. You'll come and see me again, Midge?

SYBIL. Yes, when you are right under the horse's hoofs.

[*Exit Sybil after Crake. Guise goes up to the table where she had been playing with the pieces, puts the bowl together.*

GUISEBURY. Yes, the pieces will join, but the bowl is broken.

[*Enter Servant.*

SERVANT. Your Grace, there are two people in the hall asking to see you. The man says his name is David Ives.

GUISEBURY (*showing slight surprise*). Show them in here and — (*with meaning to the Servant*) when they are here, find Miss Valrose and tell her that Mr. David Ives is with me here. (*Exit Servant*). David Ives! What brings him here? Can he know?

[*Re-enter Servant, announcing Mr. Ives. David enters, followed by Faith. They look round the room with great curiosity.*

DAVID. You remember me?

GUISEBURY. Perfectly, Mr. Ives. The last time I saw you, you reminded me that my neglect had lost a man's life.

DAVID. Now it has lost another. More than two years ago you brought John Christison up to London. You've kept him idling here ever since. When shall you have done with him?

[*Drusilla very cautiously appears at back and stands behind the curtains; John follows her, peeping over her shoulder.*

GUISEBURY. I've done with him now.

DAVID. Then pay him his wages and let him go. I don't understand the lad. He seems lost and dazed. I can't get him back to Endellion with me. What's the reason?

GUISEBURY. Am I his keeper? I believe Mr. Christison intends leaving London. He is free to do so. He is his own master.

DAVID. No. There's somebody up here in London who's got the mastery over John Christison, and an evil mastery it is! Who is it?

GUISEBURY. It's not I, Mr. Ives.

DAVID. Who is it?

GUISEBURY. It must be one of the other five million Londoners. You had better ask him yourself.

DAVID. I will! You've changed the lad's nature. You've made him like yourself.

GUISEBURY. You flatter me! How?

DAVID. He 's a promise-breaker.

(*Guise winces; John's face shows through the curtain, full of pain and shame.*)

But when the sea rakes his dead father out of his resting-place, as it will before long, perhaps John Christison will remember the promise he gave, and come back to Endellion and fulfill it.

(*John's face withdraws.*)

That 's all I have to say to you. (*Curtly, going.*) Good-morning. Come, Faith.

FAITH. Good-morning, your Grace. My father is not quite himself to-day. We 've been beside ourselves with grief the last few days. We cannot get any news of my sister Drusilla. She is not at the place where her letters are sent. We fear some mischief has happened to her.

GUISEBURY. I 'm sorry — I hope your fears are groundless.

DAVID (*to Guisebury*). What business is it of yours what has become of my child?

GUISEBURY. Wait here a few minutes. I may have some news that will surprise you —

[*Exit Guisebury. The moment he has left, John comes forward from behind the curtains.*

JOHN. David, I 've heard all you said. There was some one in London who had a mastery over me, and an evil mastery it was. But I 'll break it — I 'll go back to Endellion this very night.

DAVID. You will? Ah, that 's the John Christison I knew! That 's the lad his father and I brought up after our own hearts. The lad I would have given my Drusilla to for wife!

JOHN. Don't say any more. Wait till I 've proved myself. We 'll get away from this place. You 've nothing more to do here?

FAITH. He asked us to wait till he returned.

JOHN. You 'll see him to-morrow. Don't stay here.

Go! You and Faith — wait a little while along the road for me — I'll come to you soon. I entreat you, don't stay.

FAITH. You won't fail us? You'll come to us?

JOHN. Yes. I have one thing to do here first — when that is done, I shall be my own master. Don't ask me any more — go!

DAVID. Come, Faith.

[*Exit David.*

FAITH. Oh, you have made our hearts rejoice. Now if we could but find Drusilla, and take her home with us — then all would be well.

[*John almost pushes Faith off at door, shuts it, turns round; Drusilla enters from between the curtains from another room.*

DRUSILLA. That was splendidly done, friend John. Now you will get them home to-night, and I'll write a letter and explain. I think I have imagination enough for that! (*She goes up to window; looks out.*) They've gone! (*Shows relief.*) It's really a shame to fib to them, but what can one do?

[*John has stood, stern and fixed, nerving himself.*

JOHN (*calm, stern, strong*). Listen to me! I depart from London to-night for Endellion, and as I live, I will never return to you. Perhaps I shall never see you again!

DRUSILLA (*approaching him*). Friend John!

JOHN (*repulsing her*). Whether your father and sister will come with me, I cannot tell. But they will surely come back to Endellion before many days. You know what I have done, how I have lied to them and deceived them to keep them from knowing the truth about you. From this time forth I have done with lies! I will not betray you. If they ask me of you, I will keep silent. Not one word, good or bad, will I speak of you. From this day it shall be to me as though you were dead!

[*Going. Drusilla throws her arms around him.*

DRUSILLA. And you said you loved me! Who spoke a lie then?

JOHN. I *did* love you.

DRUSILLA. And you love me still! You do! You do! You love me now!

JOHN. I — no — I — I do not love you! I will not love you!

[*Tries to take her arms from him.*

DRUSILLA. You do! You shall! Come, you will do as I wish, friend John. I cannot tell what a strange sweet feeling has been growing in my heart. (*Drawing him away from door.*) I think I am beginning to love you at last, a little. I must have you near me — because I know you are true as steel — John, you won't go to Endellion — you 'll get rid of them to-night and come back to me to-morrow? Yes, friend John —

JOHN (*after a struggle*). I cannot! I dare not! Let me go!

[*Tears himself away from her.*

DRUSILLA. You shall not go! You shall not! If you should leave me — I — don't know what will become of me! Perhaps I shall kill myself! I don't care what becomes of me! It will be your work! I love you, John, and you can do as you please with me! Who knows? You might make me a good woman! Won't you try? I could do anything for you! Ask me anything in the world — I 'll do it!

JOHN. Do you mean that? Then leave this house now, for ever. Come back to your home with your father and sister and me. Live the rest of your life so that I may forget what you have been. I will help you and be as your own brother. Will you do that?

DRUSILLA. No — it 's impossible! I hate Endellion — I must live in London! Oh, you are tiresome — you want to go — very well! Go! Go! Go! There is the

door. I hate you! I hate you! And I had begun to love you — Go!

JOHN (*tortured*). Drusilla!

DRUSILLA. Leave me! You do not love me!

JOHN. I do not love you? Do I not? Ask me anything — see if I will not do it!

DRUSILLA. Stay in London. I like you to be near me — and perhaps some day I will reward you as you never hoped for. Who knows? Perhaps some day I will give you myself!

JOHN (*fiercely*). Ah, do you think I would take you? Do you think it means nothing what we were taught? That you can give yourself first to him and then to me! Oh, when I knew of it, I thought I would kill him — and many times I 've been near doing it! Very well — give yourself to me! I 'll take you! But let me kill him first — and then come to me and let us kill ourselves together. Will you do that? Will you do that? Do you love me enough for that?

DRUSILLA. You 're mad! Come, be sensible, — you won't go, John — I must have you for my friend. You 'll stay with me?

JOHN (*has recovered his calmness*). No — I leave here to-night. I have said it and I 'll keep my word.

DRUSILLA. You do not love me! You do not love me!

JOHN. I do not love you! Tear out this heart of mine and see! What do you want of the man that loves you? His life? You can have mine. I 'd suffer anything — I 'd dare anything — I 'd be your bond-slave and pay your penalty — I 'd give all myself for years beyond number, to make you fit to be loved at the last! Take all my strength, my hopes, my worldly comfort, every drop of joy that my tongue shall ever taste — That 's nothing — all is nothing! All is less than dust! Set any price upon yourself! I 'll pay it! I 'll give you all — all — save only my word, my faith, my duty, my soul! I will not pay them for you!

Not them! Not them! No! No! No!

[*Rushes off wildly. Drusilla sits crying; looks up from her tears, flings her handkerchief on the ground, goes to door, calls "John!" rushes up to back, meets Guisebury, who enters.*

GUISEBURY (*very calmly*). What is it?

DRUSILLA (*controls herself*). Nothing.

GUISEBURY. Where are you going in such a hurry?

DRUSILLA. Nowhere.

GUISEBURY. Di! Di! I have something to say to you. I've been looking for you all over the grounds. Where are your father and sister?

DRUSILLA. Gone.

GUISEBURY. Perhaps it's better. I shall see your father to-morrow, and can speak to him then. Di, will you give me a few moments? You'll be pleased to hear what I have to say.

DRUSILLA. If it's short and sweet, I shall.

GUISEBURY. I think it will be sweet. I'll make it short. (*Goes to her with great tenderness.*) I wish you to do me the honour of becoming my wife.

DRUSILLA. What? What? Say it again!

GUISEBURY. I offer you my hand. Will you be my wife?

DRUSILLA. You don't mean it?

GUISEBURY. Indeed I do. I don't profess to be a pattern, but I don't want to sink any lower than I am! I know my love isn't worth much, but such as it is, you have it all. I'm fond of you, Di! You've always been able to twist me round your finger. You can't say that I haven't valued very highly the privilege of being ruined by you.

DRUSILLA. It's been very pleasant, hasn't it?

GUISEBURY. Delightful while it lasted. Only—

DRUSILLA. Only—

GUISEBURY. I'm ruined!

DRUSILLA. Yes, and when a man's ruined, it's time for him to turn over a new leaf.

GUISEBURY. Yes. My only reason for turning over a new leaf is that I feel wretched and contemptible as I am. Di — I 'm in your hands. We 've wasted our lives —

DRUSILLA. Excuse me, Val — I 'm not twenty-five. I 've only wasted part of mine at present.

GUISEBURY. Don't waste the other part, and don't let me waste what is left of mine. I daresay everybody will cut us — most respectable pepole have cut me for the last five years — but we 'll hold on to each other. We 'll be married quietly, and go into some quiet little continental place —

[*Approaching her very tenderly.*

DRUSILLA. No — Val — we will not.

GUISEBURY. Well, we 'll live where you please. I can't provide for you in the style you are used to. We must cut down everything. But you 're welcome to all I have. Di, you 'll stick to me now? Mine 's a broken life, but I want to pick up the pieces. You 'll help me? You 'll be my wife?

DRUSILLA. My dear Val, don't ask me for the one thing I cannot give you.

GUISEBURY. You don't mean it, Di! I know I 've knocked about the old title and tarnished it, but I 'll polish it up as well as I can now you are going to wear it.

DRUSILLA. No, Val. I'm really sensible of the honour you have done me, but I must decline. I must indeed.

GUISEBURY. Don't throw me over, Di. If you do, I don't know what will become of me. I 've been thoroughly shaken the last few months — I 'm as weak as a child, and I want somebody to cling to. You 're the only woman who has ever had what I 've got in the way of a heart — you have it still — Di, we 've thrown away our best chances of happiness — let 's save what we can from the wreck.

DRUSILLA. No, my dear Val — no, no, no!

GUISEBURY. You refuse me?

DRUSILLA. I refuse you. To live cheaply in a little continental town — my dear Val, it would be purgatory! I must have my London, my Paris, my theatre, my dancing, my public to worship me.

GUISEBURY (*greatly hurt and piqued*). You refuse me?

DRUSILLA. Yes. We've had our cake and eaten it. Now the feast is over, and there's nothing to do but to say good-bye and part friends. Good-bye.

GUISEBURY. No. Di. The feast is not over. We won't say good-bye.

DRUSILLA. You won't say good-bye?

GUISEBURY. Not now — we will say good-bye — but not now!

(*Drusilla shrugs shoulders and exit. Guisebury stands silent for some moments, then bursts into a little mocking laugh.*)

This world has given me a few good kicks — I've had just enough of it. I'll give this world one good kick back, and then I'll get out of it!

CURTAIN

(*Six months pass between Acts II and III.*)

ACT III

THE LAST FEAST

SCENE. *Hall and staircase at the Duke of Guisebury's, Guisebury House, Saint-James's Square. The wide handsome staircase takes up the centre of stage and leads to a gallery which runs along the top, and ends in doors on the right and left.*

Discover Footman. Enter Goldspink.

GOLDSPINK. Dinner over, Charles?

FOOTMAN. I've left them at dessert. They're going to have coffee here.

GOLDSPINK. This is a rummy go, Charles! He's had a few rummy goes in his time — in fact I should say his whole life has been a series of rummy goes — but this is the rummiest of all!

FOOTMAN. Where's he going?

GOLDSPINK. He has n't taken any passage for anywhere; he has n't made any enquiries about any vessels, or shown any interest in foreign countries. And yet he's on the hop somewhere — and shortly.

FOOTMAN. He's been in tremendous spirits all through dinner. Such raillery, Mr. Goldspink! Such delicate persiflage! It's been quite a feast of wit!

GOLDSPINK. I don't understand Guise lately. He's never had any secrets from me! Never troubled to lock up his letters, or any meanness of that sort. But this last week he's puzzled me, Charles!

FOOTMAN. There's something curious about this little tête-à-tête dinner with her, and the big reception afterwards.

GOLDSPINK. Just so! There's more in it, Charles, than meets the eye! I don't know what the denouement

will be — but you mark my words, Charles, there will be a denouement of some kind or the other.

FOOTMAN. He 's give Martin orders to have out all the '68 Château Lafitte and the '74 P—J— for the reception to-night. Fancy turning all them blessed old dowagers onto '68 Lafitte. It 's disgusting!

GOLDSPINK. Guise always was a damned fool with his wine and his money! But I ain't the one to shy stones at him for that! He 's chucked enough about for me to be the owner of six houses in Gladstone Terrace, Freetrade Road, Peckham.

[*Enter Guisebury.*

GUISEBURY. I 'm glad to hear it, Goldspink! You might perhaps have invested my money in something less extremely radical.

GOLDSPINK. Your Grace — if you 'll pardon my saying so — my political convictions are exactly the same as your Grace's. And I 'll try to get the name of the terrace altered.

GUISEBURY. I would n't, Goldspink. I 've no doubt it 's admirably descriptive. And I don't propose to take the least interest in English politics for the future. Lady Bawtry has not come yet?

FOOTMAN. No, your Grace. Her Ladyship said she should be here at five minutes to twelve.

[*Exit Footman.*

GUISEBURY. Did you get my sleeping draught made up?

GOLDSPINK. Yes, your Grace. It 's in your bed-room.

[*Exit Goldspink. Enter Drusilla.*

DRUSILLA. Well?

GUISEBURY. Well?

DRUSILLA. This is really the end of it then?

GUISEBURY. The very end.

DRUSILLA. I should like to cry.

GUISEBURY. Why?

DRUSILLA. I don't want to give you up. That 's the worst of life. Its taste is never half as sweet as its

perfume! It is only the flowers that we don't gather that are worth gathering at all.

GUISEBURY. What! You're never going to take life seriously, Di? Just as I've discovered what a superb jest it is!

DRUSILLA. No, it is n't. It 's something between jest and earnest — something between a laugh and a cry. Only to-night, now we are parting, it seems a little nearer a cry! I shall miss you, Val! Shall you miss me?

[*Coquettish pose; sugar-tongs in hand.*

GUISEBURY. Not in the least. Two lumps.

DRUSILLA. Oh, but you must. It will be unkind. It will be ungallant to forget me!

GUISEBURY. When you and I have parted after the reception to-night, I shan't give you twenty thoughts for the rest of my life.

DRUSILLA. But that 's monstrous! That 's a challenge to me to win you again!

GUISEBURY. You can't wring a wren's neck twice!

DRUSILLA. Do you know, Val, you 've been charming the last few days, and to-night at dinner I felt that if I had a heart I could lose it to you.

GUISEBURY. If you had a heart I should have won it years ago.

DRUSILLA. And broken it!

GUISEBURY. Most likely! You liked our dinner to-night?

DRUSILLA. It was exquisite. And you were the most delightful companion. What is the matter with you? You seem so light-hearted to-night — so unlike yourself.

GUISEBURY. I 've paid all my debts — except one, and that will give me no trouble. That 's quite unlike myself.

DRUSILLA. And you 've sold Danecourt?

GUISEBURY. Yes, my cousin and I put it in the pot.

Samuelson the stockbroker made us a splendid bid — I found it would just clear me and leave me a few thousands to the good, and I thought I could n't do better than give you the most récherché dinner possible and a big reception afterwards.

DRUSILLA. In my honour?

GUISEBURY. In your honour and for your honour. You know, my dear Di, there have been rumours about you and me, rumours which might affect your future — so just to show there is absolutely no foundation — I have asked my aunt, Lady Bawtry, to do the honours for me, and I 've invited all my set.

DRUSILLA. Oh, but that 's perfectly delightful of you!

GUISEBURY. Half of them were scandalized, and declined. The other half were scandalized, and accepted. You shall dance yourself out of my life, and I 'll take leave of you all. To-night when I bid my last guest farewell, I shan't have a single care or anxiety in the world. Tell me, Di, when I 've left England, what are you going to do with yourself?

DRUSILLA. I have some dancing engagements at private houses. They pay me very well. I shall go on with that while I 'm in fashion. That will be this season — and perhaps next —

GUISEBURY. *Après?*

DRUSILLA. Then I shall go to America — or into a convent.

GUISEBURY. A convent?

DRUSILLA. Yes. The Catholic is such an artistic religion. No harmoniums. I think I should like to try it for three months.

GUISEBURY. And then?

DRUSILLA. And then? And then? Who knows? I don't! Lately I seem to be pursuing something that always escapes me. At first I thought it was love for that boy John Christison. Guise, do you know where I went the other week when the Richmond Place was broken up?

GUISEBURY. Where?

DRUSILLA. To Endellion.

GUISEBURY. Endellion? You saw your father?

DRUSILLA. No. He is still in London.

GUISEBURY. In London? What 's he doing up here?

DRUSILLA. Looking for me. Poor father. I wish I could let him know I am quite safe — without telling him in what way.

GUISEBURY. What did you do in Endellion?

DRUSILLA. I only stayed there a few hours — and I saw no one but John Christison. He has begun the breakwater, and he looked grubby and good and happy in his dismal way. I was rather disgusted with him.

GUISEBURY. Why?

DRUSILLA. Because he is forgetting me. I have lost my power over him. As I have lost my power over you. I want you to worship me as you did, and I can't make you. I feel that everything is slipping away from me; I feel that I 'm going to be cheated out of my youth and beauty and the homage that men owe me! Just when I long for more life, more pleasure, more empire! Oh! I hope I shall never live to grow old!

GUISEBURY. It would be a pity!

DRUSILLA. What makes you such a stone towards me? Am I losing my power over everybody, as I have lost it over you!

GUISEBURY. Try! There will be a crowd here to-night. Practise on them. You 'll give us a dance?

DRUSILLA. Yes. Is n't my dress maddening? If you knew what trouble I 've taken over it for you —

GUISEBURY. For me? You are kind. I wished to make your dance a great success. My aunt, Lady Bawtry, will be here soon.

DRUSILLA. And I 've got to put the finishing touch to my dress. But I must have another word with you before we part forever.

GUISEBURY. Yes, one word more — but only one — Adieu!

DRUSILLA. Oh, don't say it yet.

[*Exit Drusilla.*

GUISEBURY. One word more, old love — Adieu — One word more, old world — Adieu. Ten minutes to twelve. About another two hours' consciousness, and perhaps another hour more — without consciousness! Strange! I shan't drop off to sleep to-night — I shall drop off to death. But really one drops off to death every night for eight hours. Except when one has insomnia. Life 's nothing more than insomnia after all — and I 've had it badly. It would be rather interesting to leave behind me an account of my feelings for this last hour or so. 'Pon my word, I don't know that I have been such a fool after all. I 've had a great deal of pleasure in life — and I 've got two or three more hours. Let me see how I really feel. I did sleep last night. I can understand now why a condemned man always sleeps so pleasantly the last night. Yes — life is insomnia — nothing more. (*Feels his pulse.*) It 's steady and regular — about seventy, I should think. I never remember such a feeling of absolute serenity and superiority! To think that all these poor devils who are coming to my reception to-night will be full of cares and anxiety, worrying themselves about all sorts of silly social conventions, dressing themselves up in the most expensive ridiculous way, loving, hating, fighting, eating, drinking and scrambling for happiness, or what they think happiness — with not a bit of chance of reaching it — and I shall be the only really happy one among them. Yes, decidedly I 'm master of the situation. (*Feels pulse again.*) Is it seventy-five? Perhaps — but then it 's the thought of to-night's frolic. How they will chatter to-morrow — what faces they will pull! How they will moralize at my expense! I wonder if there is one single soul in this world that will be sorry that I have left it? Yes, one — Midge. I wish I could take her across the ferry with me! I 'll scribble her a line of adieu. The

letters to Crake and Dyson — I 'd forgotten them! Have I made Crake thoroughly understand? About Di's settlement? It will be at least sufficient to ensure her from want in the event of her dancing engagements failing. Yes — that will do — now for a line to Midge. "My dear Midge, by the time you get this I shall be well on my way to the new world. I sail early to-morrow. The weather is very fair and the outlook favorable — " Goldspink, you paid all those little bills?

GOLDSPINK (*entering*). Yes, your Grace.

GUISEBURY. I 've left fifty pounds in your name at the Bank, in case any claims should arise after I 've left England.

GOLDSPINK. I 'm sorry your Grace won't allow me to accompany you on your travels.

GUISEBURY. Well, the fact is, Goldspink, I don't think I shall require a valet.

GOLDSPINK. Your Grace will be rather at a loss without one.

GUISEBURY. Perhaps, Goldspink, perhaps. But in these new countries one must expect to rough it a little at first.

GOLDSPINK. Your Grace is taking a very small wardrobe.

GUISEBURY. Quite sufficient, Goldspink, quite sufficient. I wish these three letters to be posted early to-morrow morning.

GOLDSPINK. I 'll post them myself, your Grace.

GUISEBURY. Early to-morrow morning — not to-night. You understand. You 'll see the last of poor Bully Boy?

GOLDSPINK. Yes, your Grace. I 've got the poison.

GUISEBURY. I tried to do it myself, but he licked my hand, and I had n't the heart. You 're sure he won't suffer?

GOLDSPINK. Not a bit, your Grace. I had to put my old terrier out of the way last year, and he went off as

quiet as a baby going to sleep. I hope you and me, your Grace, will go as comfortably, when our time comes.

GUISEBURY. I hope so, Goldspink.

(*Exit Goldspink. Enter Charles, announcing Lady Bawtry. Enter Lady Bawtry.*)

My dear aunt! I knew you would come and do the honours for me, and shed a halo of respectability over my last reception!

[*Exit Charles.*

LADY BAWTRY. You wretched sinner! I 've shed so many haloes of respectability over you and your antics that I 've scarcely a halo left to cover my own little peccadilloes.

GUISEBURY. Your peccadilloes always become you so well, auntie, that they form a halo in themselves.

LADY BAWTRY. If my faults are charming, it is because I have the good taste to keep them decently dressed. Nobody ever saw more than the ankle of any of my indiscretions!

GUISEBURY. It was cruel of your faults to preserve their modesty.

LADY BAWTRY. I wish your faults had any modesty to preserve. Your vices are so terrible décolleté. Really, Guise, you are too outrageous for words. And what have you gained by shocking society?

GUISEBURY. Nothing. But see what society has gained by being shocked.

LADY BAWTRY. Well, what? You 've scandalized everybody, offended everybody, made things uncomfortable for all your connections. It is n't that you are worse than anybody else — I know dozens of men far worse than you. Look at Bawtry for instance — he 's going on dreadfully. But you 've not played the game fairly. Society 's the best-tempered creature that ever lived — Society allows you to do as you please, believe as you please, be as wicked as you please — only Society says,

"Don't do it openly — I want to wink at your little follies, because I want you to wink at mine."

GUISEBURY. In short, "Be as immoral as you like, but don't make a fuss about it."

LADY BAWTRY. Exactly, and keep it out of the newspapers. We all must have our little follies and indiscretions. Human nature is just what it always was and always will be. The world is just what it always was and always will be. Society is just what it always was and always will be. What is the use of making yourself a nuisance by trying to reform it on the one hand, or shocking it and defying it on the other? No, no, you good-for-nothing fellow. Turn over a new leaf this very night, and if you 're ever so much better than your neighbours, or ever so much worse, don't make them uncomfortable by letting them know it.

GUISEBURY. I 'm going to turn over a new leaf — this very night.

LADY BAWTRY. That lady is not coming to-night?

GUISEBURY. A lady is coming who has promised to dance.

LADY BAWTRY. It 's too bad of you, Guise — I will not meet her!

GUISEBURY. You applauded her dancing last year.

LADY BAWTRY. That was for charity. And everybody runs after her — it 's disgraceful. I 'm not squeamish, Guise, but really, society is getting too mixed.

GUISEBURY. It is mixed — but so it will be by and by — in both the other places — whatever principle of selection is adopted.

LADY BAWTRY. I heard you had broken off with her.

GUISEBURY. I 've not seen her for some time till to-night.

LADY BAWTRY. Why did you bring her here to-night?

GUISEBURY. Because, having done some injury to her reputation, I thought, my dear auntie, that for the sake of your scapegrace nephew —

LADY BAWTRY. I won't, Guise, positively, I won't —

GUISEBURY. Yes, you will, auntie. You 'll be generous

enough to take her under your wing, if at any time she should stand in need of a friend when I 've left England.

LADY BAWTRY. I won't! I 'll never forgive you, never!

GUISEBURY. You 'll forgive me to-morrow at this time, auntie.

LADY BAWTRY. I won't! You 're too shocking for anything!

GUISEBURY. Come, auntie — we shan't see each other for a long while. Don't let us part bad friends!

LADY BAWTRY (*kissing him*). There! You wretch! I don't know where you 're going, but wherever it is, you 'll shock them.

[*Enter Charles, announcing "Mr. Reginald Slingsby." Enter Regy.*

REGY. How d' ye do, Guise? How d' ye do, Lady Bawtry?

LADY BAWTRY. Well, Mr. Slingsby, when shall we have the pleasure of congratulating you?

[*Charles enters, announcing Sir Lionel and Lady Baldwin and Miss Baldwin, who enter.*

REGY. If I were to ask your advice on a little delicate matter, Lady Bawtry, would you give it fearlessly and frankly?

[*Exit Charles.*

LADY BAWTRY. Certainly, Mr. Slingsby. I 'm not a very charitable woman, but I never refuse advice.

REGY. You 've been to my little place — you know my man Crapper? Well, my prospective mother-in-law, Lady Poperoach, has made herself so very objectionable to poor Crapper that things have come to a crisis, and it 's a question of my forbidding her the house or losing Crapper altogether.

LADY BAWTRY. What a pity! You 'll have to let him go, then?

REGY. Let him go? Life would not be worth living without Crapper!

LADY BAWTRY. Can't you persuade him to stay?

REGY. No, Crapper 's as firm as a rock. He said to me an hour ago as he was dressing me, "Heaven forbid, sir," he said, "that I should prognosticate you against matrimony, but in the name of humanity," he said, "if it 's like this before marriage, what 's it going to be like after?" And I said, "By Jove, you 're right, Crapper"; and I sat down there and then and I wrote my ultimatum to Lady Poperoach, and Crapper 's taken it and she 's reading it this moment. Now, Lady Bawtry, don't you think I 've done right?

LADY BAWTRY. But — it will lead to breaking off the engagement!

REGY. Well, of course, it will be very unfortunate for me — but if things come to the worst, I may get another mother-in-law like Lady Poperoach, but I shall never get another valet like Crapper.

[*Enter Charles announcing Mr. Augustus Cheevers; Lord and Lady Brislington. They enter; exit Charles.*

REGY. Guise, old fellow, this is a devilish momentous night for me.

GUISEBURY. Is it?

REGY. Yes, my fate is trembling in the balance. The next three or four hours will decide what becomes of me!

GUISEBURY. And does it matter what becomes of you — Regy?

[*Charles enters, announcing Lady Poperoach, Miss Isabel Poperoach. Regy immediately rushes up stairs and off. Enter Lady Poperoach and Miss Poperoach. Exit Charles.*

LADY BRISLINGTON. I was rather doubtful about coming because — well, because of the scandal — but when I found everybody else was coming —

CHEEVERS. And bringing their daughters —

LADY BRISLINGTON. I thought there could be no harm in it. Besides I was n't sure that the — the — a — a — would be present.

CHEEVERS. Oh, yes, the — a — a — will be present.

LADY BRISLINGTON. Is she going to dance?

CHEEVERS. Yes. Did n't you see the platform?

LADY BRISLINGTON. I 'm glad she 's going to dance. Because it really puts her on the level of an entertainer — and, of course, entertainers and artists, and those people — they have morals of their own, have n't they?

CHEEVERS. Oh, yes! Plenty! Of their own!

LADY BAWTRY. I think great allowance ought to be made for —

CHEEVERS. For everybody who goes wrong. So do I. I believe with Socrates that all wrong-doing is quite involuntary. I 've only one rule in dealing with it — to extend to all man and womankind that plenary indulgence which I lavish upon myself.

LADY BRISLINGTON. Oh, there 's that dear Poniatowski!

[*Enter Poniatowski left and off, up stairs.*

CHEEVERS. The fiddler who eloped with Mrs. Brocklehurst?

LADY BRISLINGTON. They say he has played divinely ever since. We must n't miss his solo.

[*Exeunt crowd, following Poniatowski.*

CHEEVERS. Curious hangings, Guise! Where did you pick them up?

GUISEBURY. They are the funeral draperies of His Majesty, the late Emperor of China.

CHEEVERS. A funeral must be rather a festive affair in China.

GUISEBURY. Why not? Why should n't it be here? If a man must die why should he make all his friends miserable? The Romans used to feast at their funerals. Some more music. Tell Poniatowski to play again — keep it up. (*Sybil enters, walking with aid of cane.*) I hope that when I die not one eye will be the wetter, or one heart the heavier, because a good-for-nothing fellow has gone —

SYBIL. Where?

GUISEBURY. I don't know. (*Exit Cheevers up stairs.*) The Chinaman thinks he's going into nothingness and this is his mourning. We think we are going to Paradise and our friends wear black kid gloves, crape hatbands and hire a dozen men in black. We can't be going to a more comic world than this.

SYBIL. No, nor to a sadder.

GUISEBURY. I didn't expect you, Midge, I thought you wouldn't face the crowd!

SYBIL. Oh, your rooms are so large. And I so much wanted to see Nero fiddling while Rome was blazing.

GUISEBURY. I haven't provided that attraction. But there's the Hungarian Band — and Poniatowski — if he'll do?

SYBIL. Yes, he'll do for Nero — he can fiddle while your soul's — not freezing. I want to talk to you. My foot's really better — What's the matter with you?

GUISEBURY. Nothing.

SYBIL. What are you going to do after to-night?

GUISEBURY. I leave the country early to-morrow morning.

SYBIL. Where are you going?

GUISEBURY. On a voyage of discovery.

SYBIL. Where?

GUISEBURY. That's a secret.

SYBIL. Is it anywhere — anywhere that a friend could ever come to you?

GUISEBURY. What friend?

SYBIL. Myself!

GUISEBURY. You! I think not!

SYBIL. You're not going after those Arctic voyagers?

GUISEBURY. Yes, I'm going after those Arctic voyagers!

SYBIL. Then you are going to try and do something for them at last. Oh, I'm glad you're setting yourself to something! But won't it be very dangerous?

GUISEBURY. Not very, I think. Midge, what's the matter? Tears.

SYBIL. What shall I do when you're gone?

GUISEBURY. You have your poor people.

SYBIL. Oh, but they're only my chicks.

GUISEBURY. Your chicks?

SYBIL. I had a black hen at Danecourt with a lot of chicks and one duckling in her brood — it was the duckling that was always getting into harm and giving her trouble, but it was the duckling that she loved — poor silly creature! My poor people are my chicks — it's a pleasure to look after them! But I don't want that — I want the trouble and hopelessness of looking after you!

GUISEBURY (*aside*). I wish she had n't come!

SYBIL. Besides, if you go away, I shall never pull you from under the horses' hoofs. *Must* you go?

GUISEBURY. I must! I've made every arrangement for going — and none for staying.

[*Enter Cheevers and Lady Brislington.*

CHEEVERS. Now, Lady Brislington, Miss Valrose is going to dance, if you want to get a good place.

SYBIL (*to Guisebury*). Must you go?

GUISEBURY. I must! Where are you going, Midge?

SYBIL. Home. I don't care much to look at dancing. Where are you going?

GUISEBURY. To the dance!

[*Exit Guisebury.*

SYBIL. Is he really going after those Arctic voyagers? (*Sees letter on table.*) A letter for me! In his handwriting! Strange; I don't understand it! I 'll wait and see Nero fiddling.

[*Exit Sybil up stairs. Enter David Ives, forcing his way, Charles opposing him.*

DAVID. This is the Duke of Guisebury's?

CHARLES. Yes. What is your business?

DAVID. Tell thy master that David Ives would speak to him.

CHARLES. You cannot speak to him now.

DAVID. I can and I will. Take him my message or — What's that noise? What's that shouting?

CHARLES. Miss Valrose is dancing.

DAVID. Miss Valrose dancing! Where?

[*The crowd of guests enter, applauding Drusilla, who is in dancing costume, led by Guisebury. They come down-stairs, followed by guests.*

GUISEBURY. David Ives.

DRUSILLA. You!

DAVID. Thy name, woman! Dost thou hear? Who art thou? I want to know thy name?

DRUSILLA. Drusilla Ives!

DAVID. Drusilla Ives! I thought it was Delilah or Jezebel or Valrose! Drusilla Ives! Then it seems that thou art my daughter! Get a cloak or shawl to cover thy infamy and come with me! There lies thy way!

DRUSILLA. No! That is your way! This is mine!

DAVID (*to guests*). I don't know your ways, but I suppose you're made of flesh and blood the same as I am — and you have fathers and children — That's my child — my firstborn — I want to speak to my child alone! Perhaps you'll give me leave.

GUISEBURY. Your father wishes to speak to you — your father!

DAVID. I'll deal with thee to-morrow!

GUISEBURY (*to David*). To-morrow! If you please! Some music there — please! Tell them to give us some music! Some music! Get them away! I beg you! Will you go — if you please!

[*Exeunt Guisebury and guests, leaving David and Drusilla.*

DAVID. Now, thou shameless one!

DRUSILLA. Spare yourself, father! Words will not move me — nor threats.

DAVID. What will then? Thou — thou wanton! Thou betrayer of men! What hast thou to say.

DRUSILLA. Strike me then, if you will! You'll be reason-

able? — very well! Listen to reason then! You gave me life — you gave me health and strength and beauty! You brought me up as you thought best — But your mean, narrow life stifled me, crushed me! I could n't breathe in it! I wanted a larger, freer, wider life — I was perishing for want of it! I've kept up a life of deception for five years to spare you pain — for your sake — not for mine! Now it 's over! You know me! You see me as I am — I am the topmost rose on the topmost branch and I love the sunshine — I want admiration — applause! I want to live, and live in every pulse of me! For every moment of my life — and I will! I will be myself! You cannot change me! Leave me! Let me go!

DAVID. Let thee go! Let thee go to destruction! Stay — art thou indeed my child? No — surely thou art some changeling — thou art not the little golden-haired maiden that would climb on my knees, and throw her arms around my neck on Sunday evenings and whisper her prayers in my ear, while my prayers and thanks went up to Him who had given her to me! Oh, if there is any of my blood left in thee, if there was any faith and virtue in me when I wedded thy mother — if there was faith and virtue and truth in her — if her love for me was not a lie — own thyself my child again! My heart is breaking to gather thee to me! I will forgive thee! It is I, thy father! I will not be angry with thee any longer — I will plead with thee — I will win thee back again to repentance and righteousness! Come back with me, my daughter!

DRUSILLA. Hear me, father — you and I live in different worlds — all the old things have gone; the very words you use — righteousness, repentance, and the rest — seem strange to me! I have forgotten them — they are no longer in use — they are old-fashioned and out-worn! Do you hear? You are mad to think you will change me. I tell you the old life is gone! Waste no more

words on me! It's vain! I am your daughter no longer! Leave me! Leave me and forget me!

DAVID. Forget thee! I would I could forget thee! Forget thee! No — come with me, my child — I, thy father, command thee. Get some cloak to cover thee! Dost thou hear? Get rid of these! I'll strip thy shame from thee! (*Seizing her, dragging the trail of roses from her skirt.*) I'll leave thee none of it!

DRUSILLA (*struggles, breaks from him, runs halfway up steps*). Are you mad? Stay there! If you come a step nearer — stop there, I say! Now, have you any more to say to me?

DAVID. Yes — thou hast scorned and defied me — shut the gate on my love and forgiveness. If that word "father" means anything — if there is any reverence and authority left in it — may thy stubborn, rebellious heart be broken as thou hast broken mine — may thy beauty wither and canker thee — may thy frame be racked — I, thy father, pray it — that thy soul may be gnawn with sorrow and despair — that thy spirit may be humbled and thy proud neck bowed with agony to the dust — till thou turn to thy God and thy father's God at the last! I have said it! It is my last word to thee!

[*Exit David.*

[*Drusilla falls on stairs; the guests enter, and group round her. She beats her way through the people and exit. A burst of music, very loud. Guisebury enters, looks round. Music suddenly stops; a loud hubbub at left, on gallery. Lady Bawtry enters, very distressed.*

LADY BAWTRY. Guise! the people are asking what has happened. They are all talking about the scene here! There will be a dreadful scandal to-morrow! Half of them have gone off terribly offended.

(*Hubbub of departing guests. Carriages called. Guisebury leans against staircase taking no notice of anything, staring in front of him.*)

What 's the matter with you? Can't you say anything to them? Speak to them! Say something!

[*He does not heed her. Lady Bawtry makes a gesture of despair and comes down-stairs. Exit.*

[*Hubbub and chatter of departing guests. Cheevers and Lady Brislington have entered.*

LADY BRISLINGTON (*to Cheevers, who is helping with her cloak*). I'm sorry I came here! (*With marked emphasis.*) It was a mistake.

CHEEVERS. Guise, old fellow, this is very unfortunate.

LADY BRISLINGTON. Mr. Cheevers, will you see if my carriage is ready?

[*Cheevers gives arm, Lady Brislington passes Guisebury with marked discourtesy. Hubbub continues, shouting for carriages, etc. Guests all exeunt, leaving Guisebury standing alone motionless. Enter Goldspink.*

GOLDSPINK. What time shall I call your Grace? (*Guisebury takes no notice.*) What time shall I call your Grace? Good-night, your Grace.

[*Exit Goldspink. Clock strikes two.*

GUISEBURY. There goes my knell! Bankrupt! Suicide! Who 'll find me! Where will they bury me? The cathedral or the cross-roads? For this part of me I don't mind — and for the other — Nirvana — nothingness! Heaven — hell — who knows — who cares! Bankrupt! Suicide! Beggar in honour — in estate — in friends — in love. I won't do it like a coward, I 'll die game! I 've lived like a careless fool and I 'll die like a careless fool. A little less light —

(*Switches off electric light. Enter Sybil on stairs.*) Come, Nirvana — (*Takes out bottle.*) My very good friends, who have liked me — my very good enemies who have hated me — my dear, good women who have n't loved me, my dear weak women who have — emperors, charlatans, pickpockets, brother fools, good fellows all — here 's forgetfulness and forgiveness in this world

and a merry meeting in the next! Good-night! Good-night! Good-night!

[*Raises phial; Sybil has come down stairs behind him; she draws down his hand, away from the poison.*

CURTAIN

(*Two years pass between Acts III and IV.*)

ACT IV

THE DESIRED HAVEN

SCENE. *As in Act I.*

Guisebury discovered; changed, aged.

GUISEBURY. My work done! My promise kept! Only that one last stone to lay. Yes, Endellion's safe. I've done something at last. It's about the only thing I have done. I don't remember what else there is to go on my tombstone.

[*Sybil enters.*

SYBIL. Thoughts? Sad or pleasant?

GUISEBURY. Sadly pleasant. I was composing my epitaph.

SYBIL (*quickly, a little alarmed*). But you don't intend to need one — at present.

GUISEBURY. No, Midge. But I was thinking what a poor epitaph mine will be — when it has to be written. "Here lies Valentine Danecourt, Duke of Guisebury. He lived at issue with the Ten Commandments and died at peace with all men."

SYBIL. "P.S. He built Endellion breakwater." And then will follow the rest of your good deeds — which you haven't done yet.

GUISEBURY. I haven't done this — it isn't I who have built it.

SYBIL. Yes, it is — not with your hands, but with your head and heart. Where would it have been in the gale last November if you hadn't stood by the men day and night and kept up their courage? Don't you remember how they were running away from it, and you stood there and made them all ashamed of themselves? Oh, it has changed you!

GUISEBURY. I shall never be the same man that I was before my illness. That dreadful two months. You pulled me through, Midge, but — I 'm maimed for life. Oh, Midge, those thirty-five wasted years!

SYBIL. They don't count. It 's your two well-spent years that count. That 's life. To save a little out of the wreck — to show a balance on the right side. That 's life.

GUISEBURY. Midge, sometimes you make me feel almost good.

SYBIL. But you are good — did n't you know that?

GUISEBURY. Am I? I don't go to church very often.

SYBIL. Yes, you do — in your way.

GUISEBURY. And I don't believe in much.

SYBIL. Yes, you do. You believe in work, and you believe in all the great things that people call by different names.

GUISEBURY. What things?

SYBIL. The things that all our wise people pretend to be quarrelling about. But they 're only quarrelling about words — they all believe in the things.

GUISEBURY. What things do you mean?

SYBIL. Why, all the watchwords and passwords — Faith, Duty, Love, Conscience, God. Nobody can help believing them. Turn them out at the door, they only fly in at the window — trample them into the ground, they spring up again stronger than ever. Prove them falsehoods in Greek and Latin, and you only find that they are the first truths that the mother tells to her baby.

GUISEBURY (*nodding*). Midge, what would you have done if you had been too late that night — if I had done it?

SYBIL. Oh, I don't know. I think I should have come after you, and snatched you back somehow.

GUISEBURY (*startled, takes her hands*). Midge, is it too late to pick up the pieces?

SYBIL. Hush!

[*David Ives, much older, in deep mourning, enters from house. As he passes Guisebury, the two men look at each other for a moment, but make no sign. David turns and goes on sternly.*

GUISEBURY. You've not spoken to me since I've been in the island. Can't you forget the past?

DAVID (*calmly, without resentment*). I'm in mourning for my daughter Drusilla.

[*Exit Guisebury in great despair. Sybil hops up to David.*

SYBIL. There's a certain little passage, Mr. Ives, you know the passage I mean — something about forgiveness — you've said it every night and morning for fifty years — If I were you, Mr. Ives, when you say that little passage to-night, I should ask myself what it means.

[*She hops off.*

DAVID (*looking after her*). Perhaps you're right — who knows? It is in Thy hands!

[*Enter up from path by beach a Sister of Mercy, Sister Beatrice.*

SISTER BEATRICE. Can you tell me which is Mr. David Ives's house?

DAVID. I am David Ives.

SISTER BEATRICE. I am Sister Beatrice, who wrote you eight months ago from New Orleans.

DAVID. Concerning the death of my daughter Drusilla. It was thou who nursed her. (*Shakes hands; a pause.*) Did she repent?

SISTER BEATRICE. She died in peace, and received pardon from the Church.

DAVID. Tell me — what was her manner of life before — before she died? I saw in a newspaper that she was dancing in public in New Orleans. Was it so?

SISTER BEATRICE. You have forgiven her. She is dead. Don't ask any more.

DAVID. Nay, but I will know. Tell me the truth. Hide

nothing — the truth — the whole truth. She was dancing — how long before she died?

SISTER BEATRICE. She was dancing on the —

DAVID. Go on.

SISTER BEATRICE. On the Sunday night.

DAVID. And died — when?

SISTER BEATRICE. The Wednesday morning.

(*David utters a great cry of pain and sinks onto rock, overcome.*)

Be comforted. Heaven is full of forgiveness.

[*David, after a pause, rises as if half-dazed; speaks in a quiet, hoarse, indifferent tone.*

DAVID. You have some things of hers. Where are they?

SISTER BEATRICE. In the sailing boat that brought me over.

DAVID. If you 'll show me where they are, I 'll bring them up. (*Exit Sister Beatrice down cliff.*) Dancing before all the city one Sunday night — in her grave the next.

[*Exit down cliff after Sister Beatrice.*

[*Enter Faith and John.*

JOHN. Take care, dear one, thou must not tax thy strength.

FAITH. But I am well-nigh recovered. I do not need to lean on you.

JOHN. Yet do it — if not from need, lean on me from love.

FAITH. It is sweet to breathe the air again. Why dost thou look at me with such a strange, new tenderness?

JOHN. Because thou art so strangely dear to me.

FAITH. Dost thou love me more than when I wedded thee?

JOHN. Indeed I do. When I told thee of all that had happened to me in London and thou didst forgive me all my shameful past, I thought I could not love thee more. Oh, Faith, I do not deserve such happiness as thou hast given me!

FAITH (*suddenly*). Hush! (*Listening towards the cottage door.*) Dost thou not hear?

JOHN. No, there 's nothing.

FAITH (*nodding*). Yes. My ears are quicker than thine.

[*Exit into cottage.*

JOHN (*looking after her*). How could I ever stray from thee? Thou hast brought me home.

[*Enter from cliff above, Regy and Crake.*

CRAKE. Ah, Mr. Christison, so we shall get this last stone laid to-morrow?

JOHN. Yes, the Duke has been kind enough to put off laying the last stone till my wife could be there. And it 's to be to-morrow.

REGY. That 's a comfort. I promised poor old Guise I 'd wait till it was over. Now I can toddle back to town on Tuesday. London 's good enough for me.

CRAKE (*looking down over cliff below*). Look, that boat has come round the corner now — she 's making for the breakwater.

JOHN. A boat to-day! Where does she come from?

CRAKE. There 's a large sailing vessel standing off the point, and the boat put off from her about half an hour ago.

JOHN. Put in for water, I suppose. They 're calling to the men on shore. There 's quite a crowd gathering. All the folks are coming out of their houses. Look, they 're all running to the breakwater. What can it be?

[*Exit John hurriedly down cliff.*

REGY. Come back with me to town on Tuesday, Crake?

CRAKE. No, I must stay on with the Duke.

REGY. He 's very glad he 's got you back again.

CRAKE. Ah, I ought never to have left him. It was a shabby thing to do — and though I was making a good thing out of the Chichester property, I was very glad to throw it up and come back to Guisebury.

REGY. Poor old Guise. Fancy his sticking down here

for two years. Look at the place. It 's bad enough on a week-day. Look at it on a Sunday afternoon. What was it made for?

CRAKE. Well, why did you come here?

REGY. I 'm a little bit goey on the chest, and I 've done Monte Carlo till I 'm sick of it. My doctor happened to mention Penzance, and so, as old Guise was down here, I thought, like a fool, I 'd come and give him a look-up. Well, I came, and when I 'd been here ten minutes, I sat down on the top of a rock, and I solemnly asked myself this question, " What am I here for? Why did I give up my club, and my decent cooking, and my snug little rooms in the Albany, to come down to this benighted spot and play Robinson-Crusoe for the benefit of the sea-gulls? " What am I doing it for, Crake, eh?

CRAKE. Just so. What are you?

REGY (*confidentially*). I say, Crake, sometimes I can't understand myself.

CRAKE. No? What is there in your character that puzzles you?

REGY. I 've knocked about the world all my life — been everywhere — seen everything — done everything. You 'd call me a pretty smart, wide-awake fellow, would n't you, Crake?

CRAKE (*dubiously*). Ye — es.

REGY. There 's nothing of the fool about me, is there?

CRAKE. Not at all.

REGY. Then why do I keep on acting like a fool? Why do I go and land myself in one infernal scrape after another?

CRAKE. Ah, just so. Why do you?

REGY (*very confidentially*). Sometimes, Crake, I fancy I 'm more of a fool than anybody suspects. I let Lady Poperoach twist me round her finger.

CRAKE. But you were clever enough to get out of that in the end.

REGY. Yes, because they caught Jack Percival. You don't think Lady Poperoach would let me walk out of the trap unless she was sure Jack would walk in — not likely. Poor Jack!

CRAKE. Has n't the marriage between Mr. Percival and Miss Poperoach turned out quite — quite —

REGY (*chuckles*). Yes — quite. I had a letter from Jack the other day. Three weeks ago Lady Poperoach took away his latch-key, and deliberately dropped it over the bridge into the Serpentine in Jack's presence. (*Pulls out his own latch-key, gazes at it very affectionately, puts it back in waistcoat pocket, chuckles, reads letter.*)

"Lady Poperoach unfortunately discovered Jack's rare collection of antique prints. She burnt the whole collection."

(*Shakes hands cordially with himself.*)

I can't be so very much of a fool after all, Crake, for I 'm nearly forty and I 've kept out of it till now. Poor old Jack! Stole his latch-key! Shake hands, Regy, dear old boy.

(*Shakes hands with himself.*)

Well, Crake, I 've enjoyed my chat with you. What the deuce to do with myself before dinner!

[*Exit Regy.*

CRAKE (*Looking after him*). If he lives till he 's seventy, I wonder whether he 'll marry his cook? Oh, it 's of no consequence — except to the cook.

(*Enter Guisebury.*)

Well, Duke, you may congratulate yourself — Endellion will turn out a splendid property after all. It 's lucky the harbor was built just in time to develop the trade of the island.

GUISEBURY. Sybil always said it would. Crake, who was fool enough to advance the money?

CRAKE. What does it matter? It was a capital investment for him.

GUISEBURY. Who was it?

CRAKE (*uneasily*). Well, Duke, I'd saved a considerable sum in your service, and after I'd left you, I felt ashamed of it, and when Sybil came to me and said she wanted the money I'd saved for her, to invest, I found that I could manage to raise enough to begin the breakwater, and as it was going on well, I've had no difficulty in getting the remainder.

GUISEBURY (*shakes his head*). You're a thoroughly bad, unnatural father, Crake, to risk her money on such a worthless fellow as I. How can I thank you, Crake?

CRAKE. Virtue is its own reward, Duke. Virtue and five per cent.

[*Exit Crake.*

GUISEBURY. Yes, she was right. Everybody begins to respect me. I used to stand in such horror of being respected. It's rather a comfortable feeling after all.

[*David enters.*

DAVID. He's there! Shall I give it to him myself? No, I've no dealings with him. (*Goes towards house, then repeats Sybil's words.*) "There's a certain little passage, Mr. Ives, something about forgiveness." (*Stops, turns, goes up to Guisebury.*) I've something for you. They've brought me back the things that belonged to her. I dare not bring them to my house till I have made way with all the tokens of her occupation — dancing dresses and the like. When I was looking them through I found this letter — it's meant for you — you see, she began it and never finished it. (*Guisebury takes it — reads it.*) Is there anything in it that concerns me?

GUISEBURY. Read it.

[*Gives it to David: David reads it; shows emotion.*

DAVID. You offered to make her your wife?

GUISEBURY. Yes.

DAVID. She refused you?

GUISEBURY. Yes.

DAVID. You loved her?

GUISEBURY. Yes.

(*David offers his hand; a silent handshake between the two men; David goes into house.*)

He forgives me! If I could forgive myself! If I could once pass those little homes down there without remembering that my broken word robbed each of them of a husband, or a father!

[*Mrs. Christison creeps on in the dusk.*

MRS. CHRISTISON. Your Grace, they're all come back from the dead — but my Mark is not with them.

GUISEBURY. Poor thing!

MRS. CHRISTISON. They're all so old, so changed. You would n't know them.

GUISEBURY (*soothingly*). Yes, yes, you must expect them to be changed.

MRS. CHRISTISON. But why has n't my Mark come back with them? There are all his old friends, Stephen and Captain Leddra —

GUISEBURY (*startled*). What! Don't speak of them. There! Go away! You'll meet your husband some day! There! Don't say any more.

MRS. CHRISTISON. But all the island is rejoicing. They were all like you. They would n't believe it at first. Nobody knew Captain Leddra — his wife did n't know him, but when she saw that it was himself indeed, she screamed for joy and hung about his neck.

[*Sybil enters.*

GUISEBURY. Woman! Be silent! Don't bring your mad tales here. Ah — my poor woman — your husband will come back some day. (*To Sybil.*) Shall I never forget it! Shall I always be reminded of it! It's no use, Midge. I'm chained to look always backwards. But I cannot reach one hand or move one step to change the past.

[*Sinks upon rock in despair. Distant cheering from the beach below.*

SYBIL (*creeps up to him*). The woman's tale is not so impossible after all. Others have returned before — it is just possible that they may have escaped.

GUISEBURY. No! No! I've gone through it thousands of times — Besides, the ship was broken up — the fragments were found.

SYBIL. But if they had reached home after all!

GUISEBURY. Midge! (*Looks at her.*) My God! It's true!

SYBIL (*pointing to the beach below*). Look!

[*A bell rings loudly from below.*

GUISEBURY. Are they all saved?

SYBIL. All the Endellion men — all are safe.

GUISEBURY. All! All!

[*Bursts into tears.*

SYBIL (*touches him; he turns*). So He bringeth them to their desired haven.

GUISEBURY. And me — to my desired haven.

SYBIL. Listen!

[*Faint cheers.*

CURTAIN

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